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FORESHEWINGS OF CHRIST

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES
IN THE PREPARATION FOR
THE ADVENT

BY
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LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

NEW YORK AND TORONTO : THE MACMILLAN CO.

1930

BS 1176
MA

By the same Author

ASPECTS OF THE WAY

being Meditations and Studies
in the Life of Jesus Christ.

Cambridge University Press

6s.



Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

THE expository studies contained in this volume deal with the Preparation for Christ in Hebrew history. I have selected a few out of the many great names in the Old Testament that point forward to Him. Some of these are not usually regarded as possessing this significance. One has been included, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, not as of those in whom the Spirit of Christ was revealed, but because his story shows rather that striving of the Spirit to enter human life which it is in our power not to defeat, but to postpone. This leads one to say quite frankly that in dealing with any of the Hebrew Scriptures, as in dealing with the men and women they describe, a Christian expositor is obliged sometimes to recognise defects. One of the Apocryphal Gospels, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which contains several credible additions to the canonical records, adds these words to the saying of Jesus about forgiving our brother unto seventy times seven, *For in the prophets also, after they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, the word of sin was found.*¹ Many excellent scholars accept this addition as authentic. Whether it is so or not, the hermeneutic position which Christ's own teaching compels us to take is one of moral discrimination. It would be as foolish to look for inerrancy in the Scriptures as to look for

¹ *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Dr. M. R. James), p. 6.

moral perfection in the men who wrote them ; for if God did not keep the moral nature of His servants wholly free from sin, one can hardly expect that He would protect their minds from all misjudgment. To assert otherwise would be to affirm that His interest in our intellect is more urgent than His care that we should be good.

In preparing these expositions I have had in mind the reader who, though without Hebrew scholarship, values the presentation of Old Testament themes in agreement with modern research. Several of the earlier sections appeared in the *Aldersgate Magazine* (edited by the Rev. J. C. Mantripp) during 1926 and are here revised and enlarged. The study of *Job* includes a few paragraphs from an article I contributed to vol. xxvi of *The Expository Times*.

A. D. M.

DANBURY,
ESSEX.

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Truth is so of kin to our better nature that we should know her, even through a rent in her veil, as the young one knows his mother.

CHARLES DOUGHTY (*Arabia Deserta*, ii. 378).

To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her [Truth's] body is homogeneous and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic and makes up the best harmony in a church.

MILTON (*Areopagitica*).

To handle these matters properly there is needed a poise so perfect, that the least overweight in any direction tends to destroy the balance. Temper destroys it, a crotchet destroys it, even erudition may destroy it.

MATTHEW ARNOLD (*On translating Homer*).

I

BALAAM

*From cloud-zoned pinnacles of the secret spirit
Song falls precipitant in dizzying streams ;
And, like a mountain-hold when war-shouts stir it,
The mind's recessèd fastness casts to light
Its gleaming multitudes, that from every height
Unfurl the flaming of a thousand dreams.*

FRANCIS THOMPSON (*Sister Songs*).

I

BROKEN clouds, here dark and there lustrous, surround the figure of Balaam the son of Beor. If one accepted as entirely reliable all that is written of him in Scripture, it could only be after performing harmonistic efforts in which a man's intellectual conscience would be subjected to a heavy strain, and through which also he would be forced to accept a tale of ancient warfare, frightful enough in itself and full of difficulty for religion.

The traditional story of Balaam is contained in Numbers xxii-xxiv. He was a heathen diviner who, being summoned from his own distant country by the Moabite king Balak to curse Israel, came, after sundry delays, and instead of cursing, pronounced a series of blessings and predicted Moab's ultimate overthrow. Two verses in a later chapter (xxx. 8, 16) tell us that afterwards Balaam sought to help Balak in another way, presumably being moved thereto by hope of gain. He counselled Balak (so it is said) to entice Israelite men by the lures of Moabite women into acts of idolatry, thus bringing upon Israel Divine chastisement. In a war which followed between the two peoples, Balaam is declared to have been amongst the Moabite slain.¹

Now the whole character of Balaam as described

¹ Cf. also Joshua xiii. 22.

in the earlier chapters—his careful waiting upon God, his superiority to bribes, his magnificent defiance of Balak—is at variance with the evil policy thus ascribed to him. Unhappily human nature does sometimes sag under the weight of gold-pressure, and men who have successfully resisted unexpected temptations do, at times, succumb to second thoughts. It is conceivable, therefore, that Balaam did lapse from those splendid heights of vision upon which he served the will of God, and with a cunning truly Satanic sought to make impossible the very blessings he had pronounced upon Israel. But one ought to have very strong evidence before believing this. And happily the evidence is almost transparently false. All that we have which could be called evidence consists of these two verses in Numbers xxxi (8 and 16). They govern the later evil repute of Balaam in Philo¹ and in the New Testament.² But Numbers xxxi was written long after Numbers xxii-xxiv and is plainly unhistorical. Its account of the war between Moab and Israel is incredible. It tells us that without the loss of a single Hebrew warrior (verse 49) every Moabite man was killed and that all women who were not virgins, together with every male child, were massacred in cold blood. Certainly had such events happened Moab could never have been the troublesome neighbour to Israel she afterwards proved herself to be. For once at least surely the Hebrew people were not as savage as their writers represented. A war between Moab and Israel just before the Conquest of Canaan may well

¹ *Life of Moses*, i. 53.

² 2 Peter ii. 13-15 (= Jude 11) and Rev. ii. 14.

have happened, but not as pictured here. Accordingly these unsupported verses about Balaam are simply of no value except as shewing us the sinister purpose of detraction which animated the writer. That purpose is all too obvious. During the course of Hebrew history there emerged two mutually hostile forces in Israel—a large and liberal spirit which conceived of Religion and of God with almost New Testament universality of accent, and on the other side, a narrow, particularistic piety, entrenched in the sense of priestly and national privileges, resentful of the wideness of God's mercy amongst the Gentile races. It was this latter spirit which the Book of Jonah was written to rebuke. Here in Numbers it blackened the character of Balaam. Could any inspiration come out of Aram? Could a heathen diviner speak for Yahweh? If God used such a man it would be in despite of his own black-bloodedness, and the issue would show the inherent depravity of every alien soothsayer.

But even the three chapters, Numbers xxii–xxiv, which give us all our real *data* for the study of Balaam are not without inconsistencies. They break up into two somewhat different traditions. Apart from a number of small discrepancies which need not detain us now, there is one glaring contradiction. After receiving Divine permission to go with Balak's messengers (xxii. 20), Balaam incurs Yahweh's anger for going (xxii. 21–22). This can only be explained on the supposition that two documents were before the compiler of the book, and that he blended the two, with less regard for consistency than for the sacred, or even magical, value of a written scroll—a mode of valuation,

infinitely pathetic to us moderns with our experience of the varying worth of the printed page, but common enough in almost all ages prior to our own. Now the picturesque story of the ass and the angel belongs to the less favourable of the two Balaam-documents. Here Balaam acts in defiance of Yahweh and escapes the angel's sword only through the greater religious sensitiveness of his ass. The alternative and more reasonable story, telling us of the Divine sanction given to the journey, is consistent with the Balaam-poems that follow, and opens to us large thoughts of the inspiration which comes through character.

II

He was one who so manipulated the machinery of divination as to evoke in himself a peculiar talent of second sight. The supernatural world opened its gates and he saw visions of men and things not revealed to others. Also, God was real to him, and he prayed with the sure hope of answer. These two workings of his nature, the magic and the religious, were not discontinuous. If like Joseph he used a divining cup, or striding to some hill-top sought portents in the clouds and in the cries of birds, yet such methods were but like the wheels on which our aeroplanes run for a few yards before mounting into the heights of the sky. They gave him a purchase for exaltation, a means of that cohesion of faculties wherein the subconscious and the aware coincided in one full energy and the whole man was able to take hold of God and become a seer, whose blessings and maledictions might win fame for him throughout Arabia.

He was great in fidelity and courage. At his tent-door stand a group of gorgeously arrayed sheikhs, their turbans adorned with rubies, their sandals tied with silver strings. Slaves move in the background, holding camels laden with the rewards of divination. It is the second time within a few weeks, or perhaps months, a goodly company of such princes of Moab have waited at Balaam's door soliciting the cursing of Israel.

*And they came to Balaam and they said to him, Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, 'Pray, let nothing hinder thee from coming to me. For I will very greatly honour thee, and all that thou biddest me I will do. Pray come then, and curse for me this people.' And Balaam answered and said to the ambassadors of Balak, 'If Balak would give me his houseful of silver and gold, I have no power to go beyond the word of Yahweh my God, to do less or more. Now therefore pray do ye also rest here this night, that I may know what further Yahweh will speak to me.'*¹

That is the note of a man who cannot be bought, and who knows how to wait humbly upon God. He has been blamed for parleying at all with this second embassy, God having bidden him refuse the first. But the issue shews that he was following closely the Divine leading. For, *At night God came to Balaam, and said to him, 'If the men be come to call thee, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak unto thee—only that shalt thou do.'* Clearly since the first embassy there has been a movement in the counsels of Heaven. Balak's persistence in

¹ Throughout this book I have ventured to offer my own rendering of Scripture passages, except in a few places where due acknowledgment of other translations is made.

opposition to Israel is to be met by using against him the very weapon he has coveted. So Balaam now has a positive mission from God.

Riding in the cavalcade of Balak's embassy up from the deep rich valleys of Arnon with their roaring streams and woods, Balaam's mind is much alone; his thoughts are full of the coming adventure and of his past experiences in reading hidden things. When the great Moab plateau is reached and in the distance shines its white-walled capital, he is aware of a band of camel-riders sweeping out to meet him. Before the sun has fallen more than a little he is face to face with Balak. Very haughty is the bearing of the Moabite king. *And Balak said to Balaam, 'Did I not urgently send to call thee? Why didst thou not come to me? Have I not indeed power to honour thee?'* But the man he is dealing with is of a spirit equal to his own. *And Balaam said to Balak, 'See, I am come to thee. But have I power to speak one word? The word which God puts into my mouth that will I speak.'*

Then follows a series of scenes of intense interest. On three different heights, Bamoth-Baal, Zophim on the head of Pisgah, and Peor overlooking Jeshimon (the desert of devastation) does Balak, under Balaam's direction, build altars and offer sacrifices. After each offering Balaam leaves the king and his nobles, and communes alone with God. *He went, we read, to a bare height.* He stands there on the skyline alone, watching, hour after hour. The eagles swoop from their eyries. Low down over the Dead Sea the black clouds are shot with lightning. A wind sweeps suddenly, streaming his robes and long hair behind him, shrieking

through precipices beneath, and driving the smoke of Balak's altars into the faces of his courtiers. Then Balaam turns, and in the flame of his eyes as he descends to meet the king it is evident the Deity has come. The living Word of God bursts from him :

*From Aram Balak hath led me,
The King of Moab from the mountains of the East.
Come curse Jacob for me,
And come denounce Israel.
How shall I curse whom God has not cursed ?
And how shall I denounce whom Yahweh has not
denounced ?
For from the summit of these cliffs I see him,
And from the heights I observe him.
Lo ! a people dwelling apart,
And not to be reckoned with other peoples !
Who can count the dust of Jacob ?
Or number the fourth part of Israel ?
When I come to die may it be as these righteous men,
And the close of my life be like theirs.*

And Balak said to Balaam, ' What hast thou done unto me ? I brought thee to curse my enemies and behold thou hast blessed them altogether ! '

Again on the second day (as we may reasonably suppose) a similar thing happens. It is from Pisgah now Balaam looks forth, and the word which comes to him is strong in the affirmation of the unchangeableness of God :

*God is not a man, that He should lie ;
Neither the son of man, that He should regret.*

That is a clear divine answer to the shifting of

the scene of sacrificial supplication. And now the blessing on Israel is enlarged and the might of Israel praised. When the oracle has ceased, these two men, both of so strong a spirit, once more fling their words in each other's faces. *And Balak said unto Balaam, 'Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.'* But Balaam answered and said to Balak, *'Did I not expressly say to thee, "All that Yahweh speaketh—that I must do"?''*

For a moment the king stands irresolute, as a gambler whose luck is being piled against him. Hesitation gives time for another thought. All divine beings, it is believed, are susceptible to *locale*. It may be the spirits that haunt the hills are estranged at Bamoth-Baal and at Pisgah, but friendly at Peor. Moreover, is anything decisive that is not threefold? He will assay the third challenge. So at Peor, on the third day, seven altars are built and a bullock and a ram offered on each. *And when Balaam saw that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel he went not as formerly in quest of signs of divination, but set his face towards the wilderness.* Divination by lots, or by portents, has often conveyed truth to men. Even the New Testament does not disdain to open its story with a revelation given through astrology. But always the love of God seeks to lift men above material apparatus and sense-impressions. So it is that in the second of Balaam's oracles he is led to declare, as it were in criticism of himself, that Israel, lying encamped there beneath his gaze, used no enchantments, God himself being already so truly with her. Thus, taught by his own growing feeling of the Presence of God, he will follow the example of Israel. He

forsakes those preliminary arts and observations which previously had served his access. Instead of these *he sets his face toward the wilderness*. The vastness of Arabia, its illimitable desert, speaks to him of the Infinite God. Space is his sacramental bread, the Eastern sky his purple wine. He makes that swift spirit-movement which, in a far later day, Plotinus named 'the flight of the alone to the Alone.' For at length even the wilderness and the sky have vanished, and Balaam has become the man whose outer eye is closed that his spirit may look upon the Almighty. Signless, symbolless, unenchanted, the God he craves comes. On each previous occasion it is said, the word of Yahweh was *put in his mouth*. His experience now is something greater. *The Spirit of God comes upon him*. He could have said with Myers' St. Paul,

Then through the pang and passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

The new oracle reveals an advance in Balaam's outlook. Israel's blessedness, he sees, shall lie in the fertility of her land, the celebrity of her king, her imperial sway over the nations. It is a case of *Deutschland über alles*. We do not wonder that when the oracle is repeated to Balak his anger manifests itself both in word and gesture, or that he bids the prophet, *Begone!*

One feels here that Balaam had run tremendous risks. The commentators remind us of Onias, a righteous man famed for his prayers, who in the century before Christ was called upon to curse the Asmonean king Aristobulus II, and who in defiance

of this demand prayed openly, 'O God, the King of the whole world, since those that stand now with me are Thy people, and those that are besieged are also Thy priests, I beseech Thee, that Thou wilt neither hearken to the prayers of those against these, nor bring to effect what these pray against those.' For which prayer, we are told, the good man was stoned to death. In face of a similar peril Balaam also found a brave answer, '*Did I not indeed speak to thy messengers, whom thou didst sent unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his houseful of silver and gold I have no power to go beyond the word of Yahweh to do either good or bad of my own inclination : what Yahweh speaks that I will speak? And now, see, I am going to my people. Come I will admonish thee as to what this people (Israel) will do to thy people hereafter.*' Then the story closes with a final oracle. In some respects it is the most interesting of all the Balaam-poems, reminding us in its mingled grandeur and obscurity of the poems of our own William Blake. The clouds of Divine judgment roll heavily upon Pagan kingdoms, but for Israel there is the light of one superb star (xxiv. 17). Evidently Balaam sees in its far-off rising the climax of all the blessings of which he has previously sung. And with the star is the sceptre of a vast dominion—militarist, savage, terrible. We ask, Can this be the Star of Bethlehem? And yet, if one may enlarge the picture a little, does not the full moon in its rising often shine blood-red, just because its light comes to us athwart the earth-damps and heavy dews of our English fields? Only when it reaches towards the zenith is the horror all purged away and its light serene as silver. And it may be that a real

vision of the coming Christ was given to Balaam, though necessarily crimsoned with the hues of earth's 'thousand wars of old.'

But to Balak Balaam's chanted declamation was as the sword of the Spirit pressed home to the very hilt. So these two men parted: *Balaam rose up and returned home, and Balak also went his way.*

III

As we read, one knows not at first which to commend most—the magnificent courage of Balaam, his loyalty to God, or the rapture of his spirit upon the heights of the unseen world.

The central significance of the man's story is that he, a world-famous magian, is led at last through loyalty to the highest to disrobe his spirit of the vestures of divination that he might receive an immediate embrace of the Divine. The most fruitful, as the most blessed, experience of life is (to quote again from Plotinus) that 'we may fold ourselves about divinity, and have no part void of contact with him.'¹ Out of such a contact our life rises to higher fortitudes and yet braver loyalties, until the whole of things spreads itself before our view.

Balaam turns our thoughts to Him Whose entire career was a witness to God in face of the menaces of rulers and priests, and Who finally *before Pontius Pilate witnessed the noble confession* (1 Tim. vi. 13). The courage of Jesus has seldom been sufficiently recognised. His loyalty to Him Who gave Him a command as to what thing He should say and how He should speak is one of the supreme things in

¹ *On the Good or the One*, ix.

history. And the source of both His courage and His loyalty lay in His intense fellowship with the Father. Characteristically it is written of Him, *He was in desert-retreats for prayer* (St. Luke v. 16) ; and again before the choosing of the twelve, *It was in these days that He went out into the mountain to pray, and His beseeching of God was all through the night* (St. Luke vi. 12) : and yet once more at a moment of grave crisis in His Galilean ministry, *He withdrew again into the mountain alone* (St. John vi. 15). Evidently Jesus often sought solitude. May I be pardoned for making here a somewhat quickly hackneyed quotation—‘Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness.’¹ No man can achieve personality, to say nothing of religion, without loneliness. Professor Whitehead’s aphorism is the mild English of the Oriental tribute to Melchizedek—*without father, without mother, without genealogy*. One has to stand thus in order to be oneself. Solitude is indeed the matrix of religion, and without religion the possibility of being a man fades away. Therefore was Jesus often alone. But Balaam and Jesus take us a step further when with them we go out to the bare height or to the desert. For if loneliness were the only thing we needed, that might be had in the town ; there is the inner chamber where we can shut-to the door and pray to the Father who sees in secret. Such, indeed, may be the one only necessary circumstance of prayer. But great praying, as when Balaam shaped the political hour between two jealous peoples, and when Jesus chose the men who were to do so much for all mankind, requires the

¹ *Religion in the Making*, p. 6 (Prof. Whitehead).

sympathy of the open air and of stars, the vastness of hills and of plains. Fluid as our bodies are in their ceaseless attrition and renewal, it is not only air and food which minister to a man's thinking, but all that the eye and the ear receive. These also help him to pray. These broaden his sympathies. These strengthen his purpose to escape the limiting resentments of human intercourse. The Infinite in us awakens when we climb to some bare height and stand there alone with God.

It is not easy for any of us to practise the best conduct without the cult of the bare height. Men are generally better in their individual doings than when they act under the pressure of conventions. We descend to meet, says Emerson most truly.

In the contact which a strong individual has with society there is much that tends to confine him to a secondary grade of right feeling—the feeling of contempt and of raw hostility towards unworthiness. So it was that Jesus found His moral equipoise through occasional escape from all touch with men into the wider regions of Nature. There like the Aramaean seer ages before Him He could discern the vast sweep of the Providence of God, and beyond 'the giant forms of empires on their way to ruin' the final glory of the Kingdom of God.

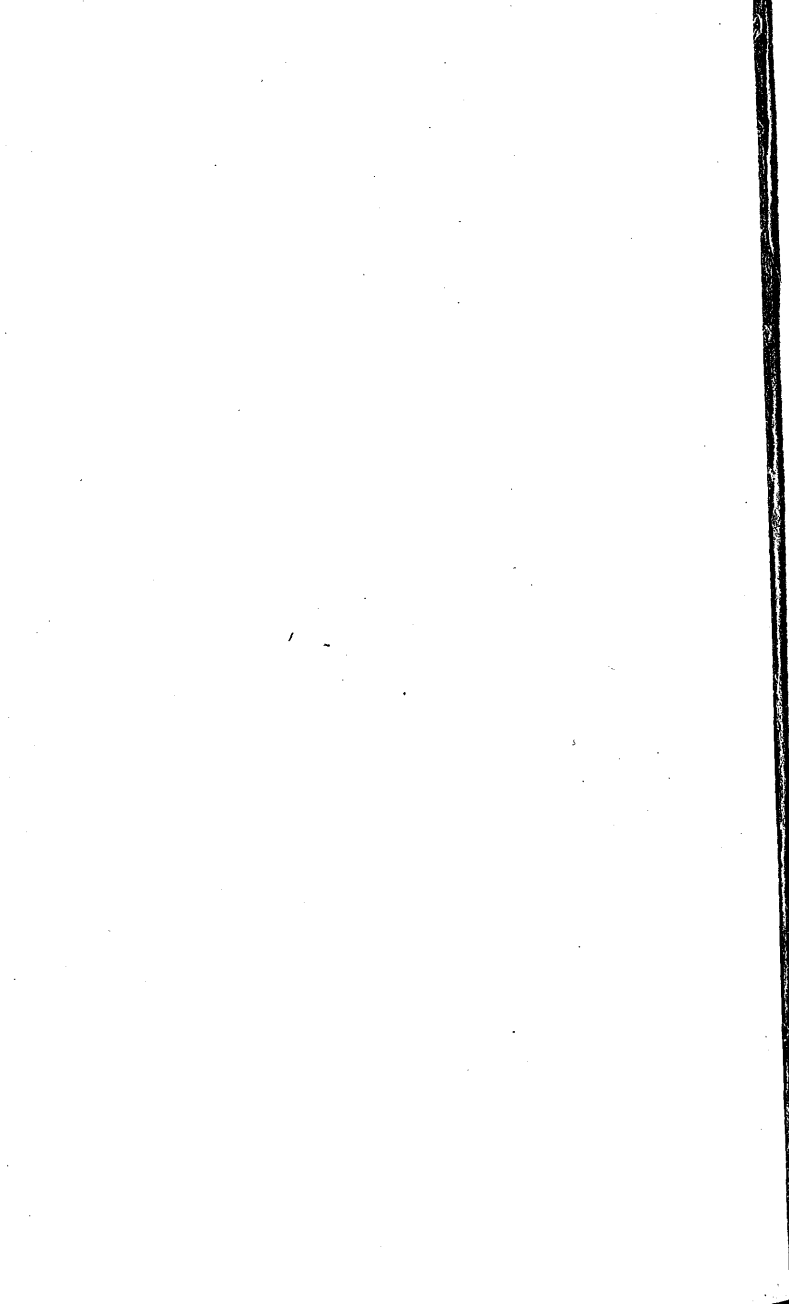
II

JOSHUA

*What you faint for, win !
Faint not, but forward press.
Heav'n proffers all : 'twere grievous sin
To live content in less.
The Sun rolls by us every day ;
And it and all things speak
To the sinking heart of man, and say,
'Tis wicked to be weak !*

COVENTRY PATMORE

(Tamerton Church Tower).



I

MODERN study of the Hebrew Scriptures has revealed the prior existence of various written traditions upon which these Scriptures were based. Thus the *Book of Joshua* cites the *Book of Jashar* as its authority for the Battle of Beth-Horon (x. 13). It is reasonable to believe that the writer drew also upon other ancient scriptures. Indeed the chief sources of his narrative can be discriminated by Hebrew scholars as plainly as the different strands in a variously coloured girdle. There is no very great difference between these documents in so far as they concern the character of Joshua. They differ mainly in respect to the measure of success attributed to him as the conqueror of Canaan. The oldest portions of the book, while disclosing a genuine hero-warrior of Titanic proportions, do not claim for Joshua a complete achievement either in politics or in religion. They show that under his superintendence the tribes of Israel set themselves to their respective tasks of conquering the territories allotted them, and that they succeeded in various degrees. In some instances, however, it is said that the original inhabitants were not subjugated.¹ A later document not only confirms this view, but narrates a last appeal of Joshua to the whole nation to put away their strange gods, showing that in the religion he sought to establish, as in the control of

¹ xvi. 10, xvii. 12, xviii. 2-3, and cf. Judges i. 1 ff.

the land, no entire success had been obtained. On the other hand, a still later document, ignoring this early honest confession of the limits of Joshua's actual achievements, glorifies him as one under whom Yahweh had given Israel complete possession of the land and absolute victory over all her foes. It will be worth while to quote this document here, because its statements have an intimate connection with our subject : *Thus Yahweh gave to Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. And Yahweh gave them rest in every direction, according to all which He swore to their fathers ; and not a man of all their enemies maintained himself before them ; indeed Yahweh gave all their enemies into their hand. No good word of all that Yahweh had spoken to the house of Israel failed ; everything was fulfilled (xxi. 43-5). Again : And now Yahweh your God has given rest (xxii. 4). And once more : And it happened a long time after, when Yahweh had given rest to Israel from all their enemies around (xxiii. 1).* These are all late passages, and as has been suggested, they do not agree with the oldest tradition. This is interesting because of the reference to Joshua in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Although the writer of that scripture did not investigate these matters critically, he is in agreement with the older and more credible estimate of Joshua's work, rather than with the later. Joshua, he says quite frankly, did not give the people rest, nor did David, also a hero-warrior, nor any other leader, except that later Joshua, Jesus the Christ.

Before we attempt to examine this judgment let us take a look at the man as he is presented in the oldest tradition. Let us try to see him in that great hour of his life when he fought the five kings of

the Amorites. That such a battle actually took place there is no reason to doubt. In dealing with the narrative concerning it, however, we must bear in mind Walter Pater's maxim—'nothing man has projected from himself is really intelligible except at its own date.'¹ Whatever value the story may have for us will accrue from the process of thought whereby we take our stand beside the writer, see what he sees and then, behind what he sees, that reality of which his vision is but one phase.

II

He hastens along the ridge of hill above the descent of Beth-horon, words of prayer leaping rhythmically from the fulness of his nature, his hand repeatedly pointing to the fast-blackening skies. With a faith as daring as that of his great namesake on the Sea of Galilee twelve centuries later, he seeks to marshal the storm-forces of nature into agreement with his tactics. In Yahweh's great war with Heathendom, which he is bidden to wage, even the sun and moon shall have their stations as he directs. *Then Joshua spoke to Yahweh in the day when Yahweh delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel : and he said openly before Israel,*

*Sun, over Gibeon stand still,
And thou Moon, over the valley of Aijalon,
And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed
Until the nation had avenged themselves of their
enemies.*

Is not this written in the Book of Jashar ? And the Sun stayed in the middle of the sky, and never pressed on to its setting about a whole day. And there was no day like

¹ Plato and Platonism, i.

that before or after, in which Yahweh listened to the voice of a man : for Yahweh was fighting for Israel (x. 12-14).

So once in the Trojan War, Agamemnon, ' King of men, prayed, " Zeus, most glorious, most great, god of the storm-cloud, that dwellest in the heaven, vouchsafe that the sun set not upon us, nor the darkness come near, till I have laid low upon the earth Priam's palace smirched with smoke, and burnt the doorways thereof with consuming fire, and rent on Hector's breast his doublet, cleft with the blade ; and about him may full many of his comrades prone in the dust bite the earth." So spake he, but not as yet would Kronion grant him fulfilment.¹ Nor need we try to think that any interruption of the movements of the solar system followed Joshua's prayer. That, indeed, is incredible. Attempts, however, are sometimes made to interpret his language in a less portentous fashion. May he not have sought merely that the storm-clouds should lighten the gathering Hebrew hosts behind him and in front the Amorite army be confused by blackness and wind ? It is simpler to say that the narrative undoubtedly indicates a coincidence of tempest and battle which Joshua welcomed as a Divine Providence of enormous value to his army.

It is true that here we touch a problem which frequently recurs in these tales of Hebrew conquest, and which must be faced, however we interpret Beth-horon. Blood was shed without regard to sex, or age, or individual character. Whole populations were blotted out. Cattle, too, were destroyed and much valuable property. We cannot justify such excesses. It is not enough to say that Christian

¹ *Iliad*, ii. 412-20 (Lang, Leaf and Myers).

standards cannot approve them. Even in that age, and earlier still, there were glimpses of a Divine Nature to which such deeds were abhorrent. The God of Akhenaten in Egypt would have rebuked them.

On the other hand, certain suggestions arise as to the Divine overruling. In the first place the iniquity of the Amorite may have been full. Such was the excuse given. Although unfortunately men are usually quick to believe evil of those whom they wish to remove out of their way, the worst effect of exterminating wars, their reaction upon the victorious side, is certainly lessened, if it is really believed that righteousness requires them. In the second place, the actual settlement of Israel upon the soil of Canaan has been the means of profound blessings to mankind as a whole, for the land had a far-reaching and, on the whole, beneficial influence upon the religion of the men whom it supported. Thus the conquest promoted the advantage of the whole human race.

Without, therefore, qualifying our general abhorrence of the modes of Joshua's warfare, we may be able to see reasons why his gigantic faith in Yahweh's readiness to fight on his side encountered no clear inhibition. Certainly his daring prayer impressed the minds of men with a sense of the majesty of their place in creation. That day of tremendous issues when the clouds seemed enrolled amongst the Hebrew forces, when lightning illumined white faces lying amid white ice-blocks in the black ravines of a troubled land, when the hours seemed to have no end and every moment was charged with the passion of years, a tremendous strength accrued to Israel's faith, and generation

after generation looking back found courage therefrom to believe in Israel's divinely ordained destiny. *There was no day like that before or after*, exclaims the writer. And was he not right? We shall, perhaps, best understand both that day and the faith it quickened, if we recall our own struggle with Spain in the sixteenth century. We cannot endorse all the Elizabethans did in the dispossession of Spain from her supremacy in the West, nor claim that their fighting was tempered with much mercy, but there is not a Protestant child in England that has not been imbued with the idea that the defeat of the Armada was a divinely assisted victory both for England and for the true Christian religion. 'It was then,' says a modern historian,¹ 'and has ever since been the fashion to say that England was saved from a very great danger by the providential interference of storms; to the Spaniards, it soothed the national pride; to the English, it seemed to point them out as the elect of God.' Unquestionably, whether such a view of the defeat of the Armada be justified or not, it has had a great deal to do with English religion. And whatever share the hailstorms of Beth-horon had in Joshua's conquest of Canaan the narrative is full of exultant confidence in Israel's destiny as 'the elect of God.' All through the succeeding generations down to the time of Jesus it fostered the conviction that the powers of nature were the allies of the Hebrew people. The seed of Apocalyptic was here, and something congruous with the faith of Jesus Himself, something too that fed His followers when they were but few amongst the Pagan multitudes of Rome, and helped them to endure the oppressions of a world soon to be swept

¹ *Cambridge Modern History*, iii. 315.

away amid falling stars and a shaking of the powers in the heavens.

I return to Joshua and his authoritative prayer to discover, if I may, the secret of his religious temper. At the very outset of his conquest of Canaan is a story of vision, set down in the narrative as a signpost for the interpreter's feet. *And it happened that when Joshua was near Jericho, he raised his eyes and looked, and—a man stood in front of him! And Joshua approaching him said, For us art thou, or for our enemies? He answered, No, but as Captain of Yahweh's host I am now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the ground and worshipped, and said to him, What has my Lord to say to his servant? And the Captain of Yahweh's host said to Joshua, Draw thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place where thou art standing is holy. And Joshua did so (v. 13–15).* There the passage abruptly ends. The directions as to the capture of Jericho with which the next chapter opens are from another source,¹ and are spoken by Yahweh Himself as in other parts of the book. The vision given to Joshua is not of Yahweh but of Yahweh's Captain or viceroy, and by its very abruptness and incompleteness it impresses us with its truth as a spiritual experience, not without parallels in later ages. Thus that same Captain whom Joshua saw came as St. Michael arrayed in blinding light to Joan of Arc, laying upon her a commission like that Joshua carried, and by the assurance of heavenly succour knit together her compassion and her shrewdness her vigour and her piety until she seemed 'a thing wholly divine, whether to see or hear.' Without her visions Joan could never have led the French armies to victory. So was it in the case of Joshua.

¹ See Bennett's *Joshua*, in *loc.* (*Sacred Books of the Old Testament*).

There are three constituents in every great soldier—physique, intellect, vision. It may be that many a patriotic Hebrew chieftain might have boasted equality with Joshua in feats of arms and, perhaps, in tactics. But it was specially by the third element of military genius—not the portion of every man—that Joshua became the conqueror of Canaan. He had the vision of the great Captain and thereby physique and intellect were intensified to a power such as the occasion and the hour demanded. This is his secret. In the records of history he is one of a class of great men and women in whom are combined a mystical temper with marked executive power. And if it be true that it is not given to everyone at critical moments in life to see the great Captain standing before him, yet each sees what he has the power to see, and the seeing quality can be developed. To change our use of sense-imagery, in his relations with the Spiritual world man is as some wonderful insect which with delicate antennae feels after a way and a sphere in which it may freely breathe and absorb power. Spiritual antennae are normal in our race, but they vary in length, in form, in flexibility, and in diversity of function. In Joshua they reached out into the Unseen a little farther than with other men and touched the primal source of all human power.

III

I turn now to the statement of the Epistle to the Hebrews denying that Joshua had given Israel rest. *If Joshua had rested them, says the writer, God would not have spoken afterwards of another day* (iv. 8). Now apparently, having written this, the writer remem-

bered those explicit statements of the Book of Joshua which asserted the contrary, for he immediately adds, *There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God*. The Revised Version here has very beautifully and rightly amended the old translation, for in the Greek original there are two words used, both meaning *rest*—*Katapausis* and *Sabbatismos*. Hitherto in writing of the promised rest the author has followed the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament and used *Katapausis*, which means merely the cessation of conflict or trouble. Now he drops this word and substitutes *Sabbatismos*. In so doing he shows true discernment of the limitation of Joshua's work. For in that Rest which Moses was said to have promised Israel, the idea was not only of peace after battle, but of the establishment of an institutionalised and happy religion.¹ The Rest into which Israel was to be led was to be a sacramental experience. Through the very triumph won over her enemies, through the acquirement of settled homes and of fruitful fields, the people were to realise afresh the goodness of their God and to enter into a covenant with Him. Such an experience would be more than a *Katapausis*. It would be a *Sabbatismos*—the rest of fellowship with God as in the glad worship of a Sabbath day.

Here we see plainly the author of Hebrews is right in what he means to say, though the letter of some part of the old scripture is against him. Joshua may have given a degree of external rest, but he never led Israel into a *Sabbath-rest*. It was the work of the later Joshua to do that.

For while to Jesus also the terrible powers of Nature were weapons ready against the day of

¹ Deut. xii. 9-12. See Driver, *International Critical Commentary*, in loc.

some new Beth-horon, some Apocalyptic day, when the sun should be darkened and the moon not give her light and Judgment should fall upon a crooked and perverse generation, another and a fairer aspect of world-forces was more commonly open to His regard and was the central inspiration of His Gospel. Those two pictures which in the second section of this study have been briefly compared—Joshua commanding the powers of the sky for battle at Beth-horon, Jesus commanding those same forces for peace on the Galilean sea—have an abiding symbolism. Both disclose a certain attitude of soul, a vision of God as the Spirit behind all the activities of Nature, and a prayer become so confident in its temper as to be command rather than entreaty. But while Joshua clave to God that he might wield His Judgment-sword, Jesus more often sought to draw down *the finger of God*¹ and lay it upon suffering men for healing and peace, as a loving child might draw down its father's hand to caress some pet creature in the home. Whereas the first Joshua used prayer and faith to force a yoke of empire upon races other than his own, the second employed these spiritual methods to deliver perishing men—to deliver them not simply from an engulfing sea but from the weakness which attaches to unbelief. *Have ye not yet faith?* He asked them (St. Mark iv. 40). They too, it appeared, might have quieted the storm if they had placed a trust in the great Father like His own.

Of course to some minds the suggestion of the stilling of a storm at any human bidding involves as much difficulty as a literal reading of Joshua's staying of the sun and moon. Any disturbance of

¹ St. Luke xi. 20.

Nature by spiritual agency is incredible to them. But that is a position which is contradicted by daily experience. For as Horace Bushnell¹ reminded us many years ago, we ourselves are supernatural agents engaged continually in disturbing the order of Nature by recombining and redirecting its forces. If we believe that there is in God the prototype of human personality, we must expect that He too will often disturb and recombine the energies over which His sovereignty exists. Certainly a solitary spirit, pervading and transcending all things, could scarcely be conceived as having any purpose in deviating from uniformity of action. But once admit the existence of kindred, though subordinate, spirits, having some freedom to mould material things to their will, and such a uniformity of action is less likely. A Universe of persons, if there is to be any intercourse between them, may quite reasonably employ as language-terms the forces and powers of their *milieu*. If it is true that a child alters the centre of the earth's gravity when it carries a toy brick across the nursery floor, while yet no stumble happens to the earth in its orbit, why should not God without disrupting the order of Nature alter the course of winds and waves at our supplication, granting us thereby, not only deliverance from peril, but also an assurance of His compassion? Certainly it is another and a complex question when we ask how far God's control of things is likely to be affected by our entreaties. But there are not wanting records of remarkably providential movements in Nature following upon human prayer.

I come back then to this word of Jesus, *Have ye*

¹ *Nature and the Supernatural*, chap. ii.

not yet faith? and I see that the wonder-powers of Jesus did not proceed from cisterns stored from His birth within Himself, but from streams of life to which others also had access. All that He did His disciples and ourselves might also do : for all was of God's working in and through Him. And the character of His deeds was determined by the fact that His faith reached home to the very heart of the Eternal. Here we see the *differentia* of Jesus. His faith is a truer and more penetrating access of the human to the Divine. He, more than Epicurus, was a man who 'passed far beyond the flaming walls of the world and traversed throughout in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe.'¹ And He came back from His mighty adventure to shew us how the processes of creation are not so much revelations of God as curtains which screen His most active presence. All faith is mighty, being just that energy in man which corresponds to the creative energy of God. Faith can and does modify material phenomena. Men are strong to do this as they believe in a living Power, not themselves, available for their need. But the faith which harmonises all our native qualities and gives them their noblest function must reach to that 'central peace' which subsists 'at the heart of endless agitation.' Joshua, tersely says the Epistle, *did not rest them*. Jesus has rested men, and the Rest into which He led His disciples was no stagnation of spirit. It quickened and carried forward the faith of His great namesake into the religion of humanity.

¹ *Lucretius*, i.

III

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

*O Thou, the wonder of all dayes !
O paragon, and pearle of praise !
O Virgin-martyr, ever blest*

*Above the rest
Of all the maiden-traine ! We come
And bring fresh strewings to thy tombe.*

*Thus, thus, and thus we compasse round
Thy harmlesse and unhaunted ground ;
And as we sing thy dirge, we will
The daffodill,
And other flowers, lay upon
(The altar of our love) thy stone.*

*Thou wonder of all maids, li'st here,
Of daughters all, the dearest deere ;
The eye of virgins ; nay, the queen
Of this smooth green,
And all sweete meades ; from whence we get
The primrose, and the violet.*

ROBERT HERRICK (*The Dirge*).



DURING the days of the Judges, somewhere amid the wooded heights, the pastures and orchards of Gilead, a man married and had a family of sons. To us he is unknown, for the name given him in the narrative, *Gilead*, is simply the name of the tribe and of the land to which he belonged. He appears to have been content with one wife, as in those days was not always the rule with men. Perhaps just because this was rather advanced morality, he lapsed on one occasion into infidelity. A harlot, possibly attached to a heathen sanctuary, presented him with another son. He took the child home. It may be some harshness, or threat, on his wife's part, foreshadowed a difficult path in life for the boy. But the baby limbs and eyes had a healthy look. And his father taking courage named him *Jephthah*, which means 'he will open.' Like a woodsman hacking a path in the dense forests of Gilead, this boy should open for himself a path in life, despite all the frowns of the more decently born. And, indeed, as it happened, Jephthah had to fend for himself. When the time came that his father's hand no longer administered justice in the home Jephthah was turned out of doors. *Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house*, said his brothers, *for thou art the son of another woman* (Judges xi. 2). Their rough hands thrust him into the street. The stone door swung-to in its well-chiselled sockets.

Eastward, the land of Gilead bared itself to the desert. Vast uplands, the pastures of countless

herds of cattle and sheep and goats, roadless, and ruled alone by custom and superstition, stretched away to the land of Tob, a district of which little is known to-day, but once inhabited by a virile race that in David's day could furnish an army of 12,000 men for mercenary warfare. Hither Jephthah came, nursing his wrath. *And there were raked together*¹ *unto Jephthah empty men who went raiding with him*—empty men for Jephthah to fill with his own adventurous spirit.² *If in those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did exactly as he pleased,*³ in Tob lawless bands like Jephthah's were not regarded as necessarily amongst the wicked whom the Almighty would some day destroy. Nowhere in that old world were such proceedings as Jephthah's looked upon as we look upon our motor-banditti to-day. Far later, in the fifth century B.C. Thucydides, writing of Greek naval piracy in an earlier age, remarks that even in his own day piracy was accounted honourable, if it was done *καλῶς*, *cleverly*, or perhaps, *genteelly*.⁴ Whether Jephthah's marauding band discriminated between fat, pursy merchants, journeying from the Euphrates valley with the spoils of slave-worked markets for trade in Egypt, and the lean sun-blackened children of Arabia, bearing on their camels frankincense and myrrh gathered with much toil for small profit, we cannot tell, but no Divine voice bade him forbear an assault upon the former, while in any attack upon the latter the game might not be worth the candle.

¹ Dr. Moore's happy rendering in the *International Critical Commentary*.

² Judges xi. 3.

³ Judges xxi. 25 (Dr. Moffatt's translation).

⁴ *Peloponnesian War*, i. 5.

Let us hope, therefore, that Jephthah's highwaymanship was gentlemanly. David, we remember, when expelled from the court of Saul did similar things, and sometimes carried his gentlemanliness to the point of generosity.

So the years passed and Jephthah took to himself a wife, who bare him a daughter, and then, perhaps, died. Thenceforth the one human being Jephthah loved as his very own was this child, born to him in his freebooter's life amid the wildernesses of Tob—a daughter of the desert, hardy, and of fearless spirit. She will seethe his pottage for him, milk the goats, be sentinel near his tent all the day until at nightfall a cloud of dust on the far horizon and spearheads ablaze with the last savage rays of the sun, tell her that her father and his men are riding back from their raid.

To Jephthah one day come certain black-bearded sheikhs from Gilead, making before him low obeisances that savour more of the amenities of the settled West than of barbaric Arabia. They are come to ask his aid in beating back the children of Ammon from the borders of Gilead. As Jephthah listens the veins swell in his temples and there are dangerous lights in his eyes. Hoarse with half-mastered passion he replies, *Are not you the men who hated me and drove me out from my father's house? Why, why, do you come to me now when you are in difficulties?* (Judges xi. 7). On the long journey eastwards into Tob the sheikhs have made ready for this conference. By far repute they know the man with whom they have to deal as a moulder of men, mighty in battle. Their answer is an offer of virtual kingship in Gilead. It comes as a dream to Jephthah

—this reversal of his old bad fortune : the outcast harlot's son made head over all the inhabitants of Gilead ! He can scarce believe it. *'If ye bring me home again'*—home, the land of his boyhood, with its fragrant woods and fountains from the rocks, moors whither often he had been sent to gather aromatic herbs for making the balm of Gilead, dells where he had fought his first battles with jackal and bear—*'if ye bring me home again to fight with the children of Ammon, and Yahweh deliver them up before me, shall I be your chief?'* And the elders of Israel said unto Jephthah : *'Yahweh shall be a hearer between us, that we will do just as thou sayest.'*

And Jephthah went, taking his little daughter with him, and thinking hard of his new unfolding life.

High up in the forests of Gilead was a holy place, where—so the tale ran—several centuries before, Jacob, the ancestor of Israel, and Laban his kinsman, each bitterly mistrusting the other (save when there was a solemn oath plighted between them) had built a cairn as a stone of witness before Yahweh, concerning a covenant they had reached that day, calling it Mizpah, the watch-tower (Gen. xxxi. 49). A shrine of Yahweh had been erected over the cairn, having an altar or a pillar, and perhaps, too, an image of the Deity. Men resorted to this place to make their compacts, as to-day we go to magistrates' courts or registrars' offices. Also, of course, the shrine had devotional uses. It is to be feared that such worship as was celebrated there was crude enough and probably debasing. To Hosea ¹ in the eighth century B.C. the Mizpah shrine was not so

¹ Hosea v. 1.

much a sanctuary as a snare, enticing men to the ruin of their souls as snares entice birds.

Thither Jephthah came with the sheikhs of Gilead. Did no shadow of the waving oaks around the place fall upon his heart to warn him that spirits of the dark nested there like unclean birds of prey? Mizpah was to prove more a snare than a sanctuary to him. There he and the sheikhs made their compact, binding one another with dreadful imprecations. Then these men went out from him. As the last sound of their footsteps died away in the wood, Jephthah's face lighted with a sudden thought, and he opened his mouth unto Yahweh.¹ He said a very big thing. Unfortunately the precise thing he said has been blunted for English readers into a very ambiguous thing. Both our great versions represent Jephthah as vowing that if Yahweh give him victory he will offer up as a burnt-offering 'whatsoever cometh forth of the doors' of his house when he returns from his campaign in peace, the implication being that he thought of some animal sacrifice; as though any religious Hebrew, however lawless his character, would dream of leaving such a matter undetermined, or propose to offer to his God any chance animal he might first see, whether clean or unclean, costly like an ox or cheap as a hen, whether male or female, whether blemished or perfect! The Hebrew text is quite clear in its purpose. Dr. Moore's rendering in the *International Critical Commentary* is, of course, the true one. *Whoever it may be that comes out of the door of my house to meet me, when I return successful from the Ammonites shall be Yahweh's, and I will offer him up as a burnt-offering.*

¹ Judges xi. 5.

We must assume that, as part of the bargain with the sheikhs just concluded, a house of his own, spacious, well-built, with a crowd of slaves to serve in it, had been promised to Jephthah. Such words of promise may have been still in his hearing, words spoken before Yahweh and not to be broken, and Jephthah's mind, full of the old, bitter memories of those scowling brothers who had cast him out of his boyhood's home, is burning with pride in the sense of his returning fortune. A far, far better establishment than his father's is to be his—his at once as headquarters for the campaign and as a king's palace where slaves will await his triumphant return. Whichever of these shall come out first to meet him on that day of triumph shall be Yahweh's burnt-offering. So before the dark oil-saturated pillar of Mizpah Jephthah prays for the help of his God and offers a price.

Such a vow had nothing very unusual in it. Higher prices still were sometimes tendered at the shrines of the Gods, as both literature and archaeology record. The tragedy in Jephthah's case was that he promised more than he meant.

His big vow made, he goes out to the war, and the brief record gives us a vision of twenty plundered cities and of a battle amid cultivated lands, where the red blood of torn and trampled vines mingles with the brighter red of the blood of men. It is victory for Jephthah all along the line.

And then—*Jephthah came to Mizpah unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances : and she was his darling ;*¹

¹ ' His only one ' rendered ' darling ' in Psalms xxii. 21, xxxv. 17, ' as the one unique and priceless possession which can never be replaced ' (*Oxford Hebrew Lexicon*).

beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And when he saw her he rent his clothes, and said, 'Oh! Oh! my daughter! Thou hast indeed brought me low, and thou! thou art as one that maketh trouble for me! For I have opened my mouth unto Yahweh, and I cannot go back' (Judges xi. 35). Slowly Jephthah's daughter answered him, taking up his words: *My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto Yahweh . . . do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth: . . . since Yahweh has wrought for thee vengeance upon thine enemies, the children of Ammon.* There was a moment's silence. Then the child cast herself upon her father, burying her garlanded head amid his torn clothes, while her attendant slave-girls crept back home.

She asks two months' reprieve that she may go down upon the mountains, leaving her father's house by the watch-tower, and in the woods roam about with her girl-companions, lamenting her maidenhood. Death to the Hebrew was generally terrible, unless it came in a good old age after some measure of success in life. There was no conception of immortality in Jephthah's day, but at all times in Israel there was a love of posterity, a sense of being immortal in one's descendants. To die childless, not to have seen one's seed, not to be remembered in Israel—this was the most bitter thing. A man felt it to be cruel, and a woman to be almost her shame. So the poignancy of Death to Jephthah's daughter was her maidenhood.

So on that sad day of Jephthah's victory, before the sun had set over the Jordan valley, some two or three of her attendants accompany her to the woods. Perhaps these like herself were natives of the land of Tob, active and fearless children of the

desert. In any case she herself is a child of Nature, and, like Rima in Hudson's *Green Mansions*, loves the wildest haunts. This land of Gilead had been the land of her dreams, the land her father had often pictured to her. When first she had caught glimpses of its wooded ridges and of gazelles feeding in its glades, she had cried out with delight, and had planned for herself days of exploration along the tracks her father had followed as a boy. Now indeed she may see its most secret recesses, but under what unforeseen conditions—she to die, a mere child ! and unwed ! But she has two whole moons before her yet.

She will sleep in the thickets, unafraid of the creatures that waken there, being as one of them, and having surely a grace like the grace of Jesus when He was with the wild beasts in the wilderness of the Temptation ; unafraid, too, of the jinn who live in the denser parts and sometimes change their shapes when approached by men ; and heedless of Lilith, the night-hag who sucks the blood of sleeping travellers. Her food will be berries and locusts and wild honey, and she will drink of a cataract and bathe in the brown pools. She has left her tambourine with her father, but a pipe cut from the reeds of some marshy bed she will shape for the long monotones of lamentation.

Day by day, the sun showers golden light upon her through the cypresses and firs, and, where the ways run down to brooks, through the long, tossing arms of the willow-tree. Night by night she watches the phases of the moon as the measures of her remaining days. The first moon waxes and wanes. The second moon waxes and wanes. The night

that follows is blacker than any she can remember in those thirteen or fourteen years of her young life. Her hour is come. There is no temptation to break her parole. The fear of Yahweh will hold her. If that broke there is her own integrity. Did this give way, subsists love of her father. *A threefold cord is not quickly broken* (Eccles. iv. 12). *And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned to her father, and he did to her what he had vowed to do—she not having known a man!*¹ But it may be she could say as Byron has interpreted her heart :

If the hand that I love lay me low,
There cannot be pain in the blow.²

Out of the death of Jephthah's daughter, we read, arose a custom of an annual four-days' celebration. Plaintive threnodies rose and fell with the Western breezes that play all day through those pleasant regions, as parties of girls passed up and down the traditional tracks of Jephthah's daughter. And because in tumultuous ages when the years of peace were few the sorrows of women were many, those who sang of her death must have thought much of the discipline appointed for themselves, like the women of Achilles weeping over the body of Patroclus, his death the pretext of their tears while secretly they are thinking of their own private sorrows.³ And it may be these Hebrew girls found courage in remembering Jephthah's daughter. Who could recall year by year such a tale of sacrifice and not be the better for it? So for her must have been a fulfilment of George Eliot's prayer—

¹ Judges xi. 39 ; Dr. Moore's translation.

² *Hebrew Melodies*.

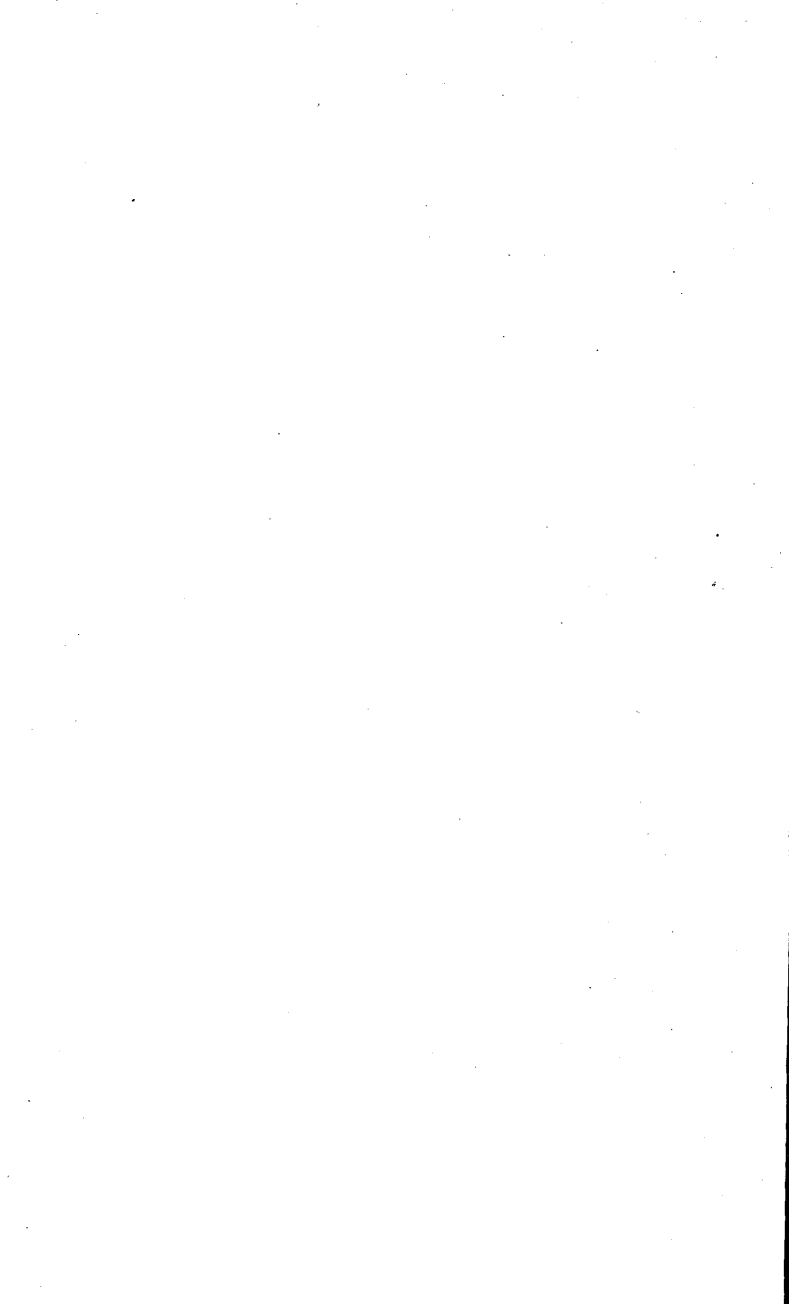
³ *Iliad*, xix. 302.

May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardour, feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

She is a figure in glory with Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia and, amongst Christian martyrs, with Blandina, the slave-girl of Lyons, of whom men said, 'Never woman in our time suffered so much as this one,' and with Joan of Arc calling upon 'Jesus' as the flames leapt about her, and with Anita, Garibaldi's wife, riding forth with him in the hour of his defeat to her death in a forlorn and lonely spot. But in one respect, even above all these, does this Hebrew martyr stand supreme—in that the summons of death came to her in an hour of music and dancing, and that without a moment's hesitation she accepted her doom and even sought to strengthen her father for his dreadful office. So to meet sudden death reveals a life of habitual self-mastery and devotion to the good of others; for we can never improvise heroism, but must needs grow it out of the cycles of our changing moods in the roughnesses and pleasantness of life.

What is her place in the approach to the Incarnation? Her religion was the religion of her time and people. God was a being to be feared. Her love was for her father rather than for Him. Were Jephthah to spare her life at the expense of his vow

some dreadful calamity would surely overtake him. She pictures him smitten by lightning, or writhing in disease, or struck down by an assassin's hand, or it might be deprived of reason, haunted by evil spirits, all the light of love and joy gone from his eyes. It is to save him from the wrath of Yahweh she is ready to die. Herein was love—Calvary-love surely, proceeding from that same Eternal Spirit Who wrought in Christ the offering that was *without blemish unto God*. In the catena of human glory there is no one nearer to Christ than Jephthah's daughter. She helped to create that ideal which reached its noblest expression in the picture of the suffering Servant of Yahweh depicted in Isaiah lii–liii. And in his boyhood Jesus must have learnt her story and pondered its teaching. Her perception of a necessity in her father's vow not to be violated with impunity, the feeling that his well-being depended upon his faithful observance of it, was in a crude manner Christ's own perception of a Divine necessity in the Cross. To Him also it was clear that a needs-be was involved in the problem of human salvation. How otherwise than by His obedience unto death could the Scriptures be fulfilled? *It behoved the Christ to suffer*. The very principle upon which all the Society of Heaven was built called for Christ's act of honour at Calvary. This unquestionably He felt. And in this Jephthah's daughter helped Him to see His way. She helped to make Him what He became, *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the World*.



IV

SAUL

*And wel I woot the substance is in me,
If any thyng shall wel reported be.*

CHAUCER (*Monk's Tale*).

*Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone ;
Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace,
It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.*

CHAUCER (*The Wife of Bath's Tale*).

c

SAUL's call to the kingship is recorded in 1 Sam. viii-xii. As elsewhere in the historical books of the Old Testament, we have to deal here with a narrative compiled from two somewhat contradictory traditions. The first has as its background the story in chapter vii of the decisive victory the Israelites achieved over the Philistines at Ebenezer. Samuel figures in this as a mighty, energising director, and to him accrue the honours of the day. *So the Philistines were subdued and did not again assail Israel's border : and Yahweh's hand was against the Philistines all Samuel's lifetime. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were returned to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and their border Israel snatched out of the hand of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.* After this several years pass unrecorded. 'Happy the nation that has no annals.' Then the eighth chapter opens by declaring that in Samuel's old age he made his sons judges over Israel and that they *took bribes and perverted justice* (viii. 3). Thereupon the elders of Israel complained to Samuel and asked for a king to judge them, as was the rule with other nations. Samuel was displeased at this and prayed to Yahweh about it. His resentment was natural, but, remembering the parallel case of Eli's sons, the reader is surprised that the iniquity complained of should be ignored by Yahweh and the feeling of Samuel shared. This request for a king is said to be a

rejection of Yahweh Himself, who was Israel's true king. Samuel then reports Yahweh's words to the people and paints the conventional portrait of an Oriental king such as Israel is likely to get—a forecast, we may note, which certainly was not fulfilled by Saul. On the insistent cry of the people, *No! there must be a king over us, that we may be like all the nations and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles* (viii. 19–20), Samuel calls for a meeting of all the tribes at Mizpah and there by the use of the sacred lot selects Saul.

In the alternative account of the founding of the kingdom, so far from its being in a time of peace after victory, Israel is being oppressed by the Philistines, who have penetrated even to the highlands of Benjamin (xiii. 3); and so far from Yahweh being displeased at any request for a king He Himself takes the initiative in providing one. *Now Yahweh uncovered the ear¹ of Samuel the day before Saul came and said, To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man from the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistines, for I have looked upon my people, for their cry is come up to Me* (ix. 15–16). Saul is providentially sent to Samuel, privately anointed, and instructed to wait for some occasion upon which to assert his leadership. This comes shortly afterwards on the eastern side of Jordan in the invasion of a new and peculiarly savage foe, Nahash the Ammonite. Then we read, *And the Spirit of God rushed upon Saul, when he heard these tidings and he blazed with anger. And he took a*

¹ It is worth while preserving this beautiful and suggestive Hebrew idiom for Revelation.

yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them, by the hand of messengers, throughout all the territories of Israel, saying, Whoever does not come out after Saul ¹ *so shall it be done unto his oxen* (1 Sam. xi. 6-7). The people respond as one man. The invader is flung back and Saul is made king by popular acclamation at Gilgal.

Now though there are here and there harmonising or connecting verses, by which the compiler of the book has reduced the amount of contradiction involved in these narratives, it is impossible to accept both stories of the kingship just as they stand. Something, however, may be said for both, and the ultimate historic truth will then be clearer to us. This may be best disclosed by attempting a sympathetic reconstruction of the national movement.

I

There was a national movement. Hitherto Israel had been merely a term for a congeries of tribes. So loosely connected were these that Judges records more than one war between them, while in 1 Sam. xiv. 21, we read of *Hebrews who until now had been on the side of the Philistines*—a non-Israelite Hebrew fringe that faded off into the general body of the Semites. There can be no wonder that in this disunited condition the tribes were subjected to those oppressions, which in Judges are narrated as so many Divine chastisements. But rightly to understand the sequence of events one has to remember that Judges is a work more of propaganda than of history. The writer

¹ The English versions and the Hebrew add *and after Samuel*. It is generally agreed, however, that this is a late addition.

seeks to read religious lessons out of the Israelite troubles. In this, however useful the teaching may be, there is some partiality. Infidelity to Yahweh may not have been the entire cause of the public disasters. Israel, like Italy before the work of Garibaldi and Mazzini, was more an ethnic than a political expression. Hence her several tribes were continually exposed to the incursions of her neighbours, as the several states of Italy before the Kingdom were continually subjected to the repressive rule of Austria or France. Political instability as well as apostasy from their highest religious conceptions made the Hebrews fall easily before their various adversaries.

There was, however, real vitality in the tribes. They could not be crushed. There came a time of national quickening, and men instinctively sought a symbol and a leader. Some evidence of this quickening may be seen in the prediction given to Saul by Samuel, *After that thou shalt come to the holy Gibeah, where lives the Resident of the Philistines, and it shall be when thou art come there to the City, thou shalt meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a guitar and a tambourine, and a flute and a lyre playing before them, while they prophesy* (x. 5). Nationalist movements nearly always have their aesthetic expression. In ancient times this took the form of a strolling minstrelsy and ecstasy. Now we notice that Saul himself, as he comes to enquire of Samuel, seems preoccupied with big concerns. There is apparently more on his mind than he openly acknowledges. In his first interview with Samuel, the latter promises to tell him on the morrow all that is in his heart, but announces

at once that the lost asses are found. Was there not then at that time something else, in Saul's thoughts, some brooding over public affairs it may be, which the seer read in his face, and which showed a man already fit for great matters?

It will be well just here to examine the brief introduction given of him in ix. 1, 2. His father is described as *a strong man and wealthy*, he himself, according to the Revised Version, as *a young man and a goodly*. The Hebrew says *young* but with a suggestion of essential rather than temporal youthfulness, for two years later we find Saul has a son capable of leading an army. The suggestion is that Saul was a man who carried his years well and whose vitality entitled him to rank with those whose strength is unimpaired by Time. The other adjective applied to him, *goodly*, is, in our present rather depraved use of such words, a somewhat tame rendering of the Hebrew. For it is one of the glories of the Hebrew language that the word we translate *good* has generally a flavour of pleasantness. And we have unhappily lost this feeling. We do not instinctively think of the winsome when we speak of 'good people.' The Hebrew did. Therefore one ventures to reproduce the Hebrew description of Saul thus : *a choice man and delightful : and there was not among the children of Israel one more delightful than he ; from his shoulders upward, he was higher than any of the people*. The reference to his stature may be taken as some definition of his delightfulness. But we are intended to see the charm of the man in the combination of physical with moral qualities. His character is attractive. He is diligent, solicitous for his father's peace of

mind, reticent of his own honours, rightly indignant at the cruelty of his country's foes, lowly and generous in his coronation. Even when in later years the great eclipse falls upon his soul he is not without flashes of noble feeling, humbling himself before his young rival David to confess openly, *Thou art more righteous than I.*

It is this attractive, modest, gallant man who is called to be leader of the movement of United Israel. And the sure seal not only of his appointment but also of his moral excellence is revealed in the gift of the Spirit of Yahweh to him. On that day of tremendous presage when Samuel appointed him, God, it is said, *revolutionised his nature* (x. 9).¹ A new experience came to him, not any seed of a higher kind of life, but the kindling of a nature already noble. What he had needed was that action of the Divine Spirit which we may best compare to a Heavenly Fire, interfusing a man's better qualities, as when under the action of great heat the still depths of a full cistern begin to boil. This it was God gave him that day. As he journeyed he mused and the fire kindled. He was approaching Gibeah where lay his home. Suddenly at a turn in the road he meets a band of prophets, singing patriotic songs. The encounter gives impetus to the gathering tumult of his nature. The Spirit of God, it is said (x. 10), *leaps upon him*, and he also prophesies. *And so it was that when all those who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied with the prophets, they said—the common people one to*

¹ The familiar rendering, *God gave him another heart*, is, in view of our Evangelical doctrine of conversion, misleading. The Hebrew is pleonastic. A literal translation would be, *God overturned to him another inner life.*

another—‘What was happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? And a man of the place replied, ‘But who is their father?’ Thus, ‘Is Saul also among the Prophets?’ became a proverb (x. 11–12). The whole of this passage reflects the quickening mind of the time. That also in the question about Saul suggests the growth of the prophetic movement. One after another in this place and in that, men were receiving the Divine *afflatus*, and drawing together in singing companies. Something of the social charm of our modern community-singing belonged to the movement. But Kish, it may be, *the man of wealth*,¹ was not a probable father of prophets. If it is hard for the average rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, it is harder still for his son. Those who, coming from such a stock, have been swathed in softness from their infancy onward, are seldom responsive to spiritual suggestions. With that intuitive perception of the requirements of religious vocation which even the common people in the East often manifest, the neighbours of Kish held it unlikely that any son of his should be a prophet of Yahweh. But amongst them was one man who understood the truth as it is in Melchizedek, that the sublimest things in human life are unlineaged. *The wind blows where it chooses, and thou hearest its sound, but thou dost not know whence it comes nor whither it goes: so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also amongst the prophets? Nay, who is their father? What had*

¹ Of valour as R.V. ‘is more than the Hebrew intends to say’ (*International Critical Commentary, in loc.*). The Hebrew word means valour sometimes, wealth at others.

parentage to do with this sheer divinity descending upon a man? The Kingdom of Heaven cannot have been far away from Israel when a mere unknown bystander had such insight into Divine methods. It was a great time in Israel. Politics throbbed with Deity. And in such a day, choice, delightful, of physical dignity, baptised by the Spirit, Saul shewed himself every inch a king.

II

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,

And burned is Apollo's laurel-bough.

Of all the Old Testament tragedies that of Saul is the most heart-rending. He was evidently a fairly successful warrior. Under him the Israelites shook off the oppression and the raiding of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah and Amalek, and were often, but not always, victorious in meeting the Philistines. Saul may be said to have welded the Israelite tribes into one people and so to have solved a pressing political problem of the time. On more than one occasion he shews himself mindful of religious requirements; on a day of battle he holds back his famished troops from breaking a ritual law by eating meat with the blood; and later he endeavours to abolish witchcraft, only, however, at last to be driven to seek the aid of one of those whom he had so banished from his territories. He is pathetically alive to his need of God's help. Through his jealousy of David, however, he becomes liable to fits of insanity. At such times if inspiration comes upon him from God it assumes a

fanatic form : he strips off his clothes as he prophesies and grovels naked in a frenzy a whole day and night. In the end Yahweh refuses to answer his prayers. The organ of spiritual perception in the man is too depraved to be used by the Spirit any more. He is reprobate.

One of the most striking interpretations of Saul is that given by the late Professor A. B. Davidson to his Hebrew class at New College, Edinburgh.¹ Dr. Davidson regarded Saul as 'a man thrust into a position he had not sought, called to a destiny that was above him, struggling with a task that was beyond him, feeling his inability and so taking it to heart that his mind became unstrung. . . . Hypocrisy was not one of his faults ; it was rather religious incapacity, a characteristic of mind. . . . He was like a blind man told to look, like a lame man told to walk. He would do right but he could not ; this kingdom of Jehovah was beyond him. He felt his incompetence, and the feeling preyed on him to madness ; the hollowness of his position upset his understanding. . . . The mysteriousness of Saul's life derives its real tragical interest for us by its connection with a Higher Power.'

I suggest a modification here. Does not the actual record of Scripture justify us in thinking that the tragedy of Saul proceeded, not so much from his connection with a Higher Power, as from his relations with the man who interpreted that Higher Power to him? Samuel, and not any Divine corner-stone, is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offence for Saul. Samuel moves

¹ *The Expositor*, 6th Series, vol. 5, pp. 162 ff.

through the history of the time as a masterful man, on his better side a pre-Christian Athanasius able to stand *contra mundum* ; on his inferior side, harsh, terrible, unscrupulous.

There are two accounts of the origin of his estrangement from Saul. In the first (xiii. 8-14) Saul's offence is one which wounds Samuel's self-esteem. At a very difficult time in the war with the Philistines, Samuel fails to keep his appointment with Saul, and the sacrifice which was to have inaugurated a battle was offered at last by the king instead of by the priest. As ancient kings often did offer sacrifices (*e.g.* both David and Solomon did so) Saul's act can scarcely have been judged profane. But Samuel appears to have been on the outlook for a quarrel, and, resenting this action, he immediately announced Saul's coming deposition in favour of a better man. Thus Samuel sowed the seeds of jealousy in the heart of Saul.

The alternative account of the trouble is given in the fifteenth chapter, as though no previous explanation of Saul's disgrace had been offered. Here the offence is Saul's failure to carry out completely the prophet's commission against Amalek. The story steeps the repute of Samuel in savagery. The Wars of the Conquest of Canaan, two hundred years earlier, had been frightful enough. So far as they were the work of any one man they fall to the account of a soldier. Joshua was pre-eminently a military leader, too absorbed in what we should call his professional duties to be sensitive to the suffering he inflicted ; moreover he was clearly convinced of a Divine commission to establish his people, even though this involved the destruction of other races. His campaign may be

compared to our own Cromwell's conquest of Ireland, both in method and in motive. But Samuel's Amalek vendetta belongs to a different category. If the story is to be taken as true, then, on the face of it, Israel had no real ground for hostility. For the *casus belli* was an act of unfriendliness two hundred years earlier! To us such a cause is incredible. Unhappily in a certain type of men the religious instinct sometimes turns into a poisonous hatred, blind, cruel, hopeless; and then offence can be found anywhere. The real impulse is simply an urge to stamp out a community foreign to oneself—foreign in creed, or in blood, the heretic in faith or in custom. It is the temperament we see in Philip II of Spain of whom also a savage decree of national extirpation is recorded. In February 1568 an edict of the Inquisition was sanctioned by him, condemning to death the whole population of the Netherlands without regard to sex or age—though, doubtless, this was more with a view to swiftness of action in dealing with outstanding individuals than to national extermination. Samuel appears to have aimed actually at the latter and to have included in his decree the destruction of the animal herds of the Amalekites as well. And the offence of Saul was that, from whatever motive, he came a little short of the full programme. Such is the second explanation offered us of Samuel's quarrel with Saul. Whether we take both or choose between them, Samuel is obviously unfriendly to his king, ready to find some occasion to express to Israel the resentment he felt in the establishment of any kingship by which his own position might be somewhat curtailed, eager to turn upon them and say 'See how your king has turned out! I told you so.'

Moreover in both stories you have that provocative word, that seed of jealousy wantonly sown in Saul's heart by the man who had anointed him to the service of Yahweh. In both Samuel declares that already Saul's successor is chosen ; he is *a man after Yahweh's own heart* (xiii. 14) ; *a neighbour of thine, better than thou !* (xv. 28). From the hour when Saul was thus incited to scan his *entourage* with suspicion of any one eminent for piety, his soul became the battle-ground of terrific passions. Perhaps it was the glare of these passions in his tell-tale face that intimidated Samuel in the next step he took. Or was it that, after the manner of the Spanish Philip, his fanaticism was coupled with secretiveness ? However explained, that next step, the anointing of Saul's successor, is done under the cover of a religious festival designed for that end. He hides a secret political move under a public festival of worship ! All is done in the name of Yahweh ! Not for the first or last time in History, fanaticism and hypocrisy are linked together. It would seem as though sometimes the very ferocity of fanaticism exhausted the soul's capacity for honest dealing, and that the man who has shewn an extreme of highhandedness has to veil the further prosecution of his schemes under pitiful artifices, because of the sheer exhaustion to which animosity always leads.

We recognise, however, that Samuel was not without occasional moments of genuine good feeling towards Saul. He, like many others, fell in love with Saul at first sight. When he anointed him, the light of Saul's eyes, the nobility of his bearing, that delightfulness of the man which captured everyone else moved Samuel, and he

embraced him.¹ Later, when Saul by his jealousy and moodiness was shewing his unfitness for kingship, Samuel, it is said, mourned for him.² But from the first he never gave Saul the backing he needed ; rather he sought, though an old man and obviously unequal to all his previous work, to continue his own control over the tribes. He would have Saul as his obedient instrument, and Saul was not quite little enough for that. The resultant clash of these two powerful personalities nearly wrecked the United Israel movement at its start. All the authority and might of that mysterious Divine world in which Saul intensely believed seemed to be behind Samuel's imperious will. To challenge a great priest's behests was more than in later times many a European king would have dared. And Samuel represented to Saul the very Fount of Deity in Israel's life. Hence the growing estrangement between the two men meant for Saul loss of power in the ruling of his people. And it is not wonderful that when, almost as in a tale of fiction, the very man, whom Samuel had furtively anointed to be Saul's successor, began to come about his court and camp, Saul should have smelt the anointing oil upon him. Nor is it wonderful that the cares and burdens of his position, together with the withdrawal of Samuel's public support, should have conspired to break his *morale*, and lead him through suspicion and jealousy to first one and then another frantic deed of hatred. His sins were many and great, and yet through them all he is a more lovable man than the priest who anointed, and then so swiftly repudiated, him.

When the end comes the old delightfulness of his

¹ x. i.

² xv. 35, xvi. i.

early manhood lights up the storm-clouds of Gilboa. His armour-bearer refuses to survive him. The men of Jabesh-Gilead, remembering that his first great battle had been for them, rescue his body from the battlefield and give it honourable burial. David, who had so fatally come into his life, and whom certainly he had treated murderously enough, sees that delightfulness too and sings about him *the song of the bow*, to be put into that best of all anthologies, the *Book of the Upright* (2 Sam. i. 18) :

*Saul and Jonathan were lovable and delightful :
Undivided in life and in death :
Swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.*

*Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in exquisite scarlet,
Who put golden adornments upon your robes*
(2 Sam. i. 23-24).

So we too would think of this first Hebrew king, whose charm intermingled with his sins to the very end. Browning's interpretation of him accords with David's and is ours.

He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere
error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ;
and still, tho' much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you,
the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,
never quite lose.

III

'No soul,' says Ruskin in his *Munera Pulveris* (p. 5), 'can be perfect in an imperfect body : no

body perfect without perfect soul. Every right action and true thought sets the seal of its beauty on person and face ; every wrong action and foul thought its seal of distortion.' Our Lord came—a man of faultless physique, of a blended majesty and humility, strong in generous indignation, pitying to all weak creatures, one who like Saul drew to Himself instantly the eyes of every man. He was a man for men—no emaciated ascetic, but full-blooded, human, tireless more than the strongest, a rock, a leader. *Rabbi*, exclaimed Nathanael on first meeting Jesus, *Thou art the Son of God ; Thou art King of Israel* (St. John i. 49). Once out of the crowd came the voice of some woman, a raised voice, shrill, though it spoke with blessing. *Happy*, she cried, *the mother who bare you and nursed you* (St. Luke xi. 27 : *Twentieth Century New Testament*). What was it, we wonder, that drew forth this tribute of admiration? It is connected in the record with one of our Lord's sternest utterances, that in which He replied to the accusation of Satanic working. There is a slow sombre movement in His language here which must surely have awed His critics. He finishes with the picture of the demon-haunted recidivist, whose last state gradually becomes worse than the first. *And it was as He said these things* there came this unexpected admiring cry, *Happy the mother who bore you and nursed you !* Does it seem incongruous that in so awful a moment of His teaching any woman, or man, should regard Him so? Had it been after the Beatitudes it would have seemed a natural interposition. Further reflection, however, leads us through this incident to see what manner of kingliness His needed to be and was. It is often not by

gentleness so much as by something from which at first we flinch, a scathe, that we are brought to change our minds for the better.

If Thou hadst not
 Been stern to me
 But left me free
I had forgot
 Myself and Thee.¹

We need and instinctively respond to the steel splendour of eyes that pierce to moral reality. We need to listen to accents that command rather than entreat. And as Jesus met the superficial criticism of His adversaries and forced them to think out what they had charged upon Him and then to look at their own sorry performances, it was just this quality of reality, finding inevitable expression in His face and voice, which drew to Him the adoration of at least one person in the crowd. Probably she scarcely understood His words—for who could have actually rejoiced in language so severe?—but she saw the gleam of His Spirit in its sincerity and scorn. She felt His kingliness and her mother's heart envied His mother her possession of such a son.

It is in incidents like this that by the choiceness of His vitality, by the splendour of His body, by the authority of His words, He recalls to us the first king of Israel in the early days of his leadership, when he faced the Ammonite enemy and sent so gruesome a bidding to battle throughout all the borders of Israel, and so came to his throne. In Saul too the Christ-Spirit flamed for awhile, to wane and fail, yet not without foreshewing of the Christ that was to be.

¹ Ben Jonson.

V

JEROBOAM, THE SON OF NEBAT

*He did much—but Sordello's chance was gone,
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed. . . .*

*Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all !*

BROWNING (*Sordello*).



THERE are men and women whose unhappy history strikes the skyline. Generation after generation, toiling along the dusty roads of life, look back, and pointing to these still-visible far-off figures, speak their names and deeds with bated breath. Now it is the *gainsaying of Korah*, and to Jude all the wickedness of subsequent schisms in Israel is pilloried in him. The figure of a slight, old woman menaces the consciences of multitudes with a more dreadful aspect than the threatening Polyphemus in Turner's great picture, as One cries with finger pointing back across many centuries, *Remember Lot's wife!* And now it is a man and a woman together, blackening against the dawn of the Holy Ghost, their shrouded figures for ever being carried by young men along the great watershed of the first Christian century; Ananias with his wife has passed into the proverbial colloquialisms of modern England as one who belongs to the Father of Lies.

But it may be that Korah, and Lot's wife, and Ananias were not really the worst people in their day. It may be that the doom which overtook them—earthquake, storm, Apostolic severity—was not the measure of their actual wickedness, nor the inauguration of final doom. Premature death, even when clearly a penalty for wrongdoing or folly, is not necessarily final punishment. For at least we can see that it should not be. Many

obviously worse sinners have lived out their three-score-years-and-ten, and thrived. Many far more wicked have been permitted time in which to repent. But then these latter did not happen to be born on one of God's busy days ; their path did not lie upon a ridge of history. It did not so much matter to others, or to God, whether they were egotistical rebels, dilatory pilgrims, or play-actors in religion. Exact Justice, motivated by love, no doubt comes to us all in the long run, but for most people it is a long run, a course very much spread out, the times of God being merciful to them. But the times for others are shortened to some high, decisive plan. They live in an hour when more is involved than they can realise. Either they must walk in strict obedience to God's will, or function in history as types of those who forget God, becoming *our examples, that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted* (1 Cor. x. 6). The classic sinners on the skyline sin vicariously and suffer that we may go free. Ananias and Sapphira are cut down, not simply because they speak and act a lie, but because God cannot afford at such a time to let hypocrisy see its seed. A little later, when the roots of the young church have won their grip of things, there may be more latitude for liars : leisure, at least, in which to learn the inevitableness of Truth.

The point to be remembered is that we are never dealt with as isolated units. We are in a process. There are great parts of that process as well as small, and we seldom know at the time we make our moral decisions of what public importance they may be. Only, Life, as it leaves behind us its

million-miled films, slowly portrays the ordering and climacteric of Truth. Great is the design of God. *Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things.*

I

There were two kings of Israel who bore the name of Jeroboam. He of whom I write was the earlier, being the first king of the Ten Tribes who broke away from the dynasty of David after the death of Solomon. He is Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and there is this repeatedly added to his name *who made Israel to sin*. The phrase, or its equivalent, occurs no fewer than sixteen times in 1 and 2 Kings. Sixteen times in these Hebrew histories, whenever the rule of a foolish or wicked monarch is described, some such formula as this is used : *he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin*. Jeroboam is one of the skyline figures in the Hebrew Newgate Calendar.

The materials for his life lie mostly in 1 Kings xi. 26-xiv. 20, but the Greek (LXX) version has in addition a lengthy passage following xii. 24 from which a few further details may be gleaned.

His father, Nebat, died when Jeroboam was young. His mother, Zeruah, like Jephthah's mother, was a harlot (LXX). Jeroboam had remarkable energy and was a man of ardent disposition. Although his mother's rank was so low he was not ashamed of her, but, perhaps defiantly, perhaps in blind love of her, gave her name to a city which he built (LXX). Solomon found him a useful man in his own building operations at Jerusalem and made him a captain over the taxing and forced

labour exacted from the tribe of Ephraim. Thereafter, however, Jeroboam was convicted of treasonable conduct and fled into Egypt. What the trouble was we do not know. All that is said is that *he raised his hand against the king* (xi. 26).

His name and subsequent history may afford some clue to this conspiracy. *Jeroboam* probably means *The people increaseth*. It suggests the idea of Democracy. Probably it was not his original name. As one whose birth was irregular he may merely have been known as *ben-Nebhât*, *the son of Nebat*, a method of designation which is thought to have implied contempt,¹ the care with which this compound name is preserved, almost wherever he is spoken of, favouring such a supposition. The new name *Jeroboam* he may have taken as a man chooses a flag or other emblem of his party. A plebeian of plebeians, resentful of Solomon's self-aggrandisement, ben-Nebhât resolved to champion the liberty of the people. He comes before us as a sort of Felix Holt the Radical, in George Eliot's story, with his fondness for banging and smashing, and yet with a real love of justice. Or again, one thinks of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus in the second century B.C., warring for the common people against the tyranny of the Roman nobles.

Solomon's reign, however, was not a time favourable for banging and smashing kings and upper classes. The people were too much dominated by Solomon's 'glory' to do more than grumble. So Jeroboam's first effort to help them fails. But before he leaves the country he is met by a prophet who, true to the democratic sympathies of his order,

¹ See Buchanan Gray's *Hebrew Proper Names*, pp. 64-65.

encourages this energetic young radical, even holding out to him the prospect of himself becoming the king of ten tribes in Israel and the father of a long line of kings who should rival the House of David.

II

The next scene in the drama is the accession of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. This is the long-expected day of the people's uprising. The Northern tribes especially are resolved to win liberty and relief from the heavy taxation. And men bethink them of the hard-working and forceful ben-Nebhât who had ventured upon a fall with Solomon himself and, although at first beaten, had taken refuge in Egypt, and was biding his time. There, indeed, the harlot's son has done well for himself, as he is fitted to do in most places, being well received by the Pharaoh Shiskak, who has given him his own sister, Anoth, to wife (LXX). So on getting some cryptic message from prominent Hebrew sheikhs Jeroboam comes back, drawing to himself the eyes of all who are ready for insurrection, as the man whose chosen name is a slogan. There is a big conclave in the Northern town of Shechem, at which the young king is present, and where Jeroboam, with the backing of strong men, presents to Rehoboam a sort of Petition of Right for the redress of grievances. The congress, however, breaks up without agreement. The air becomes full of tense expectation. The next step is that the king sends to Shechem an officer to superintend the taxation, and the populace lynch him. That, like the act of our eighteenth-

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century American colonists in destroying the tea-cargoes at Boston, is the signal for a widespread revolt. In his dealings with his subjects, the boastful but feckless young king proves as unfortunate as our old and resolute George III. The end is as had been foreshewn by the prophet. The Northern tribes make Jeroboam their king, leaving only Judah and Benjamin loyal to the House of David.

And now comes the testing time for Jeroboam. He has climbed to the sky-line. Angels, perhaps, as well as men watch him breathlessly. For—

Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.

Will Yahweh make his feet *like unto hind's feet* that he may walk upon those high places? Will he prove a George Washington and add to the fame of a successful rebel the fame of a statesman? He has led the people to victory. He has a marriage-alliance with the greatest throne in the world. All his subjects trust him. A prophet of his God has promised him blessing. Surely if he knows God's power is with him he can walk a little by faith, should the way be dim to sight. And this, indeed, is required of him.

Jeroboam's first act shews shrewd political judgment. There is almost a psychological insight in his selection of Shechem for his capital. Ancient memories that mean much to Israel gather about the place. There, on his coming into Canaan from Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham saw God in a vision. There Jacob came in peace on his return from Padan-aram, and bought land near the city and built an altar, El-elohe-Israel. There the body of Joseph was buried after its wanderings through the

forty years in the wilderness. One of the cities of refuge was Shechem. Gideon belonged to its neighbourhood. Of more political value than all, lying between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, Shechem partook of the sacredness attaching to those heights, where tradition located the inauguration of the Hebrew Law after the Conquest. Such associations help to clothe the new Government with dignity and to rally to it all those patriotic sentiments which have their roots in the history of a great race. For a *parvenu* king Shechem has the value of a Westminster, while on the other hand, Jerusalem, by comparison, is a capital founded but yesterday, riotously flamboyant with both the attractiveness and the repulsiveness of new wealth.

But the glory of Jerusalem's temple is undeniable. Its white and gold, its cedar work and gorgeous curtains, its daily sacrifices and annual feasts, and its choirs of chanting men combine to give it all the lure which a wealthy and ornate cathedral has for ourselves. And from different parts of the whole country the tribes go up to Jerusalem to worship Yahweh their God. Here lies Jeroboam's problem. He sits at Shechem pondering it. How can he expect to retain a hold of his subjects if, season by season, troops of priests and worshippers cross over the frontier to join in religious acts with the people of Judah? Will they not inevitably be drawn back to their former allegiance? Will not the splendour of the temple reduce them to David's rule? He was greatly disturbed. Yet did he but know it his opportunity was splendid. It is often out of the nebulae of our big perplexities that God shapes a star of the first magnitude. How near the kingdom

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of the Spirit must have seemed to those angels that minister to human salvation ! Would Jeroboam achieve a faith like that of Jeremiah and the prophets of the Exile, who, when all traditional altars were overthrown and priesthoods had lost their occupation, found that God was nearer than ritual had ever proclaimed Him ? Would he anticipate a yet later Teacher Who, speaking under the shadow of the same great mountain that towered over Shechem, declared, *The hour approaches when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. . . . God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship in Spirit and Truth.*

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee !

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there ?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars !—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.¹

‘ Our own clay-shuttered doors.’ Alas ! Jeroboam’s clay was stiff and impervious to the Spirit. He was bent, not upon advancing the Kingdom of Heaven, but upon making sure of his own kingdom of earth. For a year or two he frowned and fretted

¹ Francis Thompson, *The Kingdom of God.*

at the pilgrim-bands going up to his rival's capital, and then, faith in God failing, he sacrificed the higher interests to the lower and fortified his frontier with idolatry.

Two ancient holy shrines lay within his borders—in the extreme North, Dan, which had been served by a priesthood descended from Moses, and in the South, Bethel, connected by legends with Jacob. Before the building of Solomon's temple the tribes had brought their offerings to these and to other venerable fanes. Jeroboam conceives the idea of their rehabilitation. He refurnishes them, and copying in some crude way the figures of cherubim and of other creatures in Solomon's temple, he sets up bull-images as symbols of Yahweh, inviting his subjects to pay their worship before these, instead of going all the way up to Jerusalem. Indeed to fascinate and rivet more securely those religious instincts of his people which always were hankering after some concrete objective, he outdoes Jerusalem in the use of imagery, declaring of his golden calves, *See, thy Gods ! O Israel, which brought thee from out the land of Egypt* (1 Kings xii. 28).

Here lies the tragedy of Jeroboam. While God is trying to shew him a worship in advance of the ritual of his age, he chooses to go back to discredited rites. Unquestionably it is political fear which motives his apostasy. Yet that cannot excuse him. A great speech in the *Antigone* of Sophocles (175-181) rightly declares :

hard it is to learn
The mind of any mortal or the heart,
Till he be tried in chief authority.

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Power shows the man. For he who when supreme
Withholds his hand or voice from the best cause,
Being thwarted by some fear, that man to me
Appears, and ever hath appeared, most vile.¹

Such would seem to have been the judgment of Scripture upon this man Jeroboam, one of the most disappointing of the Hebrew kings—a stern judgment, insistently repeated, placarding his sin as one of the sins that pervert history. Other Hebrew kings there were whose conduct of affairs in some ways was worse than Jeroboam's, but their names are not pilloried like his. Solomon himself built altars to various deities other than Yahweh. Yet Solomon in the Old Testament is never more than a somewhat sorry backslider. Indeed Chronicles ignores his sins altogether, content that posterity should think of him as a gorgeous figure, unrebuked, and heaped with the favours of God.

But Jeroboam is the Old Testament *Man of Sin* (2 Thess. ii. 3)—one whose grave fault the inspired writers cannot leave alone. And this is because, as has already been suggested, a man's choice of the ends he would serve can never be a purely private matter. According to the place he occupies in life, and the critical importance of the age to which he belongs, is the measure of his influence upon the interests of others. Our persuading of men's consciences is either our chief righteousness or our chief sin. Jeroboam's chief sin was that *he made Israel to sin*. His apostasy begot apostates. Politically his action was successful, and just because of that it became an attractive Machiavellianism with con-

¹ Lewis Campbell's translation.

sequences disastrous to the souls of many leaders after him. The Northern caravans fell off from Jerusalem. The frontier between Israel and Judah hardened. Jeroboam felt safe. But the light that was in him became darkness, and for his whole people a lamp of the Holy Ghost went out.

III

The Spirit of Truth had been seeking a share in that Hebrew democratic movement which the man who was named after it embodied and led. Always that Spirit has been seeking entrance into earthly life. The desire of God has ever been to achieve the inspiration of His children, but their hearts are seldom open wide to receive Him. Not once, nor twice, in Israel's history it might have been said, *He came Home, but His own people did not welcome Him* (St. John i. 11). Did He not attempt the Incarnation a thousand times before at last He could and did take flesh and dwell amongst us full of grace and truth? Jeroboam did not foreshew Christ, but one can see the Divine leading from which he turned away. It was a leading which would have opened a path of great spiritual glory. Had this early Hebrew democrat solved his problem aright, he would have hastened the *Fulness of the times*, and perchance antedated the holy Nativity, helping to bring our Lord into His world some centuries before actually He came. For it was in the *Fulness of the times* He came. Not until the Fulness did He come, which means, since perfect love motived the Advent, that not until then could He come. And the Fulness was not a fulness

of sin—sin being, as St. Augustine has taught us, not a positive thing, but a privation of good. The Fulness was a Fulness of positive spiritual constituents making up the Preparation for Christ. And the Advent was not an intervention but a consummation. Christ gathered together and perfected all the gifts of the Father of Lights throughout the earlier centuries, but every one of those earlier gifts was necessary to that public mind of the Hebrew people in which *the mind that was in Christ Jesus* was rooted, and of which it became the perfect fruit.

VI

ELISHA

*Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold :
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins ;
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
Merchant of Venice, V. i.*

THE story of Elisha is more involved in miracle than that of any other Old Testament prophet. Some of the deeds ascribed to him have no Scriptural parallel, but resemble the extravagant legends of mediaeval saints. Such tales as the iron axe made to swim, the bears tearing the naughty boys of Jericho, and, long after the prophet's death, the revivifying of a dead man through contact with Elisha's bones—all savour of folk-lore rather than of history. We are here dealing with very ancient matters committed to writing (after much oral tradition) in an age that knew nothing of such an historical ideal as, for instance, that which St. Luke set before himself when he wrote his Gospel. That does not mean, however, that these stories are to be swept aside as valueless. They cannot have arisen by chance. Neither would they be so much of the same general character ¹ as they are, if they did not possess some significance. Through them we seem to discern a real person.

The last and most mythical story of Elisha—that of his bones—illustrates our contention. Here is the passage: *And Elisha died, and they buried him. Now Moabite bands used to raid the land year by year. Once they (i.e. Hebrews) were burying a man, and suddenly they saw a band, and they flung the man into Elisha's tomb,*

¹ The story of the bears is exceptional. Probably it arose as a popular legend from some comparatively trifling accident and has value only as an estimate of the high regard in which Elisha was commonly held.

and when the man rolled and touched Elisha's bones he revived and stood up on his feet (2 Kings xiii. 20-21). Could we bring ourselves to accept this as historically true we should still have to ask why it is told. But there is no value in our making a brave effort to take it literally, and certainly there is no necessity. Primitive peoples are apt to place much faith in the inherent vitality of human bones. Thus it has been believed that the bones of a man, murdered fifty years before, would bleed if touched by a murderer's hand. Barbarians often cherish the bones of their dead relatives and talk to them as to conscious beings. Tasmanian aborigines believed that the bones of dead men have a curative power over disease. Heathen Arabs used to employ human bones as charms. The veneration of Christian martyr's bones is based upon similar feelings. Hence we can understand how a fabulous story might easily grow up about Elisha's bones. But the use which the sacred writer makes of this story is in singular agreement with the whole narrative of Elisha's career. What he means us to understand is that while some men go through the world half-asleep, effecting nothing, this prophet of Yahweh was so intensely alive that even after his spirit had passed into Hades the earthly frame he had quitted retained vestiges of his power. Even as dead Elisha was more alive than many who breathed. There was tremendous energy in the man. That, indeed, is the impression one has of him all through the fifty years which followed his call to prophecy. On his deathbed Joash, the king of Israel, comes to visit him. He is grieved to see the old man evidently near his end.

My father ! he cries, My father ! Israel's chariotry ! (xiii. 14) a proverbial expression as when we call a man a host in himself. Elisha makes no response to this tribute of Joash or to his tears, but, with an economy of words, natural in a sick man, bids the king, *Take bow and arrows . . . Open the window eastward. . . . Shoot.* His hands—thin, wrinkled, ash-grey, ridged with blue veins—he has put over the king's hands, as though to link his spirit to the king's spirit. The arrow speeds through the iron-grating in the wall. Elisha exclaims, *Arrow of Victory for Yahweh ! Yes, arrow of Victory over Syria ! And thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, until thou hast exterminated them.* Did there follow some misgiving as to the fulfilment of the omen ? Was it to be an easy victory for Yahweh with such a servant as Joash ? In the rapid coursing of Elisha's thoughts the battle is not now at archery-distance. It is in the very room with him, a hand-to-hand conflict. As when sometimes in our own wars soldiers have clubbed with their rifles foes too near to be shot down, so Elisha sees around his sick-bed men stabbing with their iron-tipped arrows. Again he commands *Take the arrows ; smite to the ground.* Three times the king makes the stabbing gesture and then stays his hand. Elisha is angry. *Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times. Then hadst thou smitten Syria until thou hadst exterminated it ; but now three times only shalt thou smite Syria.* The whole of this show of fighting by Elisha's bedside is just a piece of sympathetic magic and not without its due effect. The probability is that in consequence of it Joash will go out to his Syrian wars confident of three victories, but equally sure that he can never

win a fourth, both beliefs proving real factors in his actual military successes and failures. But the notable point is the insistent spirit of the dying prophet. He is indeed just the sort of man of whom in a figure it might be said that his very bones in their last resting-place could revitalise the corpse of another. For all through his career he impresses us with his exuberant strength.

Now for the most part the deeds ascribed to Elisha are deeds of kindness. It is a boon, indeed, he confers upon the people of Jericho when he cures its bitter spring. He saves a company of young prophets from poisoned food. He is the helper of a prophet's widow in her poverty. The welcome guest of a rich woman his prayer obtains for her the gift of a child, and when the child dies its revival. In a time of famine he is so beloved that a farmer sends him twenty barley loaves and a sack of corn, which Elisha immediately distributes to the poor. He has sympathies that reach beyond nationalism ; he heals one of the generals of his country's chief enemy, Naaman the Syrian ; and once, while delivering Israel from the Syrians, he saves a body of prisoners from massacre, demanding that food be set before them and that they be sent back to their homes. For fifty years as *a holy man of God passing by continually* (iv. 9) he sways the hearts of men and women and is worth, indeed, more than an army-corps to his sovereign.

He comes of a peaceful stock, a lowlander and a man of civilised life, no ascetic like his master Elijah, but a man who sleeps in his bed at nights. Music appeals to him. Indeed, the word of Yahweh is given him, not on bare heights of the mountains

as to Balaam, nor in the deserts as to Elijah, but when a minstrel will play to him (2 Kings iii. 15). As the musician skilfully touches the harp-strings, Elisha's innermost nature is stirred. His face lights up. His eyes shine. He starts to his feet, gazing upon some remote vision. And then the revelation breaks from his lips.

. . . God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear ;
The rest may reason and welcome ; 'tis we musicians know.

Akin to this aesthetic sensibility in Elisha is his second sight, that gift which the Zulu doctors call 'Opening the Gates of Distance.' He knows the approach of persons out of the range of men's ordinary vision. He can reveal to the king of Israel the projected movements of the Syrian armies, so that in despair their officers report to the king, *Elisha the prophet who is in Israel expounds to the king of Israel the words which thou speakest in thy bedroom* (vi. 12). Whilst truly humane he is certainly an uncanny, second-sighted, telepathic man, one of those to whom God gives a clue to that mysterious buried life we all carry, and which Andrew Lang so happily called 'the X region of human nature.'

Probably the difference between those who can work actual, reasonable miracles and the rest of us is just the possession of some narrow entrance for volition into the subliminal regions of personality. It was said recently in a literary assembly that all mankind are men of genius, it is only a few who

have anything like a full use of their native powers. Certainly in most men there are large tracts of the brain never tilled. If we could but more variously explore ourselves and by the ministry of the beautiful enkindle ourselves as Elisha did, we should surely discover not only our own great range of powers, but how much more real and full the exterior world is than we had dreamed. Charles Doughty declared that one of his Arab friends could see the stars at noonday, and even the moons of Jupiter at night.¹ Is it difficult to conceive of certain men as endowed with a more complex and varied nature, in whom this supersight of Arabs might be blended with a heightened sensibility, a flesh shot through with far quicker apprehensions of the spirit than commonly we possess, men whose vision might answer to the piercingness of Röntgen rays, and who by some daily baptism in that *Fountain of Life* which is God should be able to look through the ordinary screens of matter, and see living forms which to most of us are invisible? Or again, the tone of a bell dies away on my ear. But to another it rings a moment longer. Its ringing, then, did not cease when I heard it no more. Neither did it cease when the second listener failed. Were there but more of oneself listening, a richer and more delicate life-force quickened into action, the movement of a housefly upon the window-pane might be as the tramp of a soldier across a courtyard, and one man's listening follow another's speaking till it reached the stars. In some hush of earthly traffic what finer things might then be heard! What

¹ *Arabia Deserta*, ii. 145.

movements of celestial forms ! What steps of departed friends, as from time to time they join our family circles, or attend us through our busy toil, *to guide our feet into the way of peace !* For in the revelation of the Risen Christ, God has shewn to men that there is a world not wholly of spirit, yet finer than our world of clay, a world congruous with our present flesh and blood, yet of texture more delicate and tenuous, incorruptible, amaranthine, eternal.

It is in this way I venture to express the truth of the beautiful legend of the parting of Elijah from Elisha. As these two journey together, on that last day of Elijah's life, when the homing instinct is strong upon him, and they turn their faces from the towns man has built to the wildernesses of mountain and desert ever fresh from the hand of God, Elijah says to his companion, *Ask what I shall do for thee before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, Let a first-born's share of thy Spirit be upon me ! And he answered, Thou hast asked a hard thing, but if thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be thine, but if not it shall not be thine* (ii. 9-10). If, that is, he has a certain reach of spiritual vision he may have a certain measure of spiritual power. So these two men mount higher amongst the gorges and crags of Moab. Lonely is the region they now enter. No human dwelling is in sight, scarcely a creature. Only, now and again, the eagles with their golden eyes, brightly-spotted breasts and shiny feet, drop suddenly to their nests from unseen heights, staying their fall parachute-wise with swift-outstretching of their wings as the eyrie leaps up to meet them. Here and there one swoops lower still to look more

closely at these two strange invaders of their solitude. And now there is a screaming amongst them as though they discern a gathering storm. There is no wind. Southward, the Dead Sea rots under thick mists, black and electric-blue—mists that writhe in thunderous coils. Higher and higher the prophets pass until Elisha, in some turn of the path, glancing back sees the Jordan Valley as but a green furrow set in a wide grey landscape. Then the storm bursts. The narrative calls it a whirlwind. Such a phenomenon is not unknown in that land to-day. It is a vertical uprush of air in a circling column. In a tempest like this men and trees and rock-fragments may be sucked up and hurled far away. The traveller's best chance of safety is to cast himself upon the ground and cover his head from the blinding sand and falling stones. Often with the whirlwind come darkness, rain and cold. So the storm falls upon Elijah and Elisha, cutting one from the side of the other as with the clean cutting of a knife. Elijah's cloak falls at Elisha's feet, but he himself is seen no more. He has been caught in the whirlwind's terrific uprush. On some far-off inaccessible spot his body finds its final rest. But Elisha has his vision. In the heart of the storm is the breaking of a sudden light : there are movements of heavenly forms, flame-faces, eyes that burn into memory. It is only for a moment, but that moment compresses all the values of Time. The wind and clouds of sand have fallen. Over the western hills steals the brief quiet glow of sunset. Elisha finds his way back to Jordan, as a man bemused with newly-given thought-powers he can scarce sort out or assess. But he knows he has seen

into a world beyond the world, and the Vision is the measure of his new strength.

Take one other scene of his life. On a day during the war between Syria and Samaria Elisha and his servant are in the city of Dothan. Now Dothan lies in a slightly elevated plain between Mount Carmel and the hill-country of central Palestine, a memorable highway of commerce and of war. There Joseph's brothers looking up from their midday meal saw a company of Ishmaelites entering the Pass, *with their camels carrying down into Egypt spices and balsam and myrrh* (Gen. xxxvii. 25). So through age after age the caravans daily stream through Dothan, with their shouting muleteers and their chaffering traders. Numerous armies, too, have gone that way from ancient times to our own—Egyptian and Hittite, Assyrian, Roman, Saracen and Crusader, French and British, Turk and again British. And almost all such, whether trader or soldier, have tended to shut out from the public mind of Dothan the higher world of spiritual powers. In the Dothan-roads of this world the dry breath of material interests is apt to wither from the minds of men all the orchids of delicate phantasy.

So the prophet may see God where Moses and Elijah and afterwards John the Baptist saw Him—in the wilderness and the mountain, but who shall see God in Dothan? Yet on a day when the people of Dothan awake to find their city beleaguered with Syrian chariots and infantry threatening them with pillage and death, Elisha brings to the situation the discernment of a well-cultivated man of affairs who has also the meditative

power of a hermit. *And his servant said to him, Alas ! my master, what shall we do ? And he answered, Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Yahweh, open now his eyes that he may see. And Yahweh opened the servant's eyes and he saw, and lo ! the mountain was full of horses and chariotry of fire around Elisha* (vi. 15-17). Clearly the vision is often with Elisha. For a moment, too, the intense spirituality of the man overflows like the cascade of a larger waterflow, and a humbler human channel by his side is washed with radiant sight.

Now these stories of Elisha's vision are to be coupled with the stories of his power in the service of mankind. We do not trouble to determine in his case where history ends and myth begins, for we are searching out ideas whether embodied in events or told in a tale. Only let it be remembered that a myth always has a meaning, while the lessons of history are sometimes illegible. The significance of the whole of this many-coloured web of history and myth is the sequence of these three things—vision, power, service. Here Elisha stands in a succession with Balaam and Joshua. Balaam witnesses to the possibility of vision through communion with God. Joshua suggests that vision is for the mastery of affairs. Elisha carries the testimony a stage further, defining such mastery as something other than the imperialism of a conqueror, and as being at its highest the subdual of intractable things in that service of one's fellows which may even include the service of our enemies.

How much pre-Christian Israel owed to the Elisha tradition we can hardly estimate. Must it

not have greatly helped to form the Ideal our Lord was fully to reveal? The ancient politics of Israel—her dynasties, and diplomacies, and wars—undoubtedly influenced her national character. But Politics are only one activity of Life. The tales we enjoy perhaps have a greater share in the shaping of character. That such tales as these of Elisha should have been recited a myriad times by shepherds' fires, in desert camps, and in the crowded city homes of Israel, must have helped to create a strong but benign way of Life. And such recognition as our Lord received when *He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with evil* (Acts x. 38), was possible in large part because in the popular mind a holy man of God, long ages before, had given to his fellows some true measure by which to judge of the Divine.

In Christ supremely we have the Elisha sequence—vision, power, service. The Fourth Gospel, which so clearly exalts His Divine character, yet represents Him as One who was ever receiving from a source above Himself. Just as He taught His disciples, *Apart from Me you can do nothing* (xv. 5), so He frankly confessed *I can of Myself do nothing* (v. 30). He more than any man practised the Presence of God, drawing into Himself that Fulness of Life, which evoked and intensified every human quality because He received in order to give, because *the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many* (St. Mark x. 45).

VII

HOSEA

He who traces nothing of God in his own soul, will never find God in the world of matter. . . . It is in the soul of man, when reverence, love, intelligence, magnanimity have been developed there, that the Highest can disclose itself face to face in sun-splendour, independent of all cavils and jargonings.

CARLYLE'S *Journal*,
November 13, 1869.

THE Book of Hosea is not very easy reading. There appears to be a disconnectedness in the writer's mind and at times a failure to express his thought intelligibly. Partly this is due to errors in manuscript transmission. A glance at the many marginal notes of the Revised Version will shew an English reader how confused in places the text is : a Hebrew student does not need convincing that there are many corruptions. We have to guard, however, against the temptation to impute scribal mistakes whenever our own hasty thinking fails to elucidate the writer's intellectual processes. Nor is the apparent disconnectedness due to any original incapacity for sustained thinking on the part of Hosea, so much as to the turbulence of feeling which his experience engendered. His mind, as disclosed by his book, resembles a cliff-face with many a fault in the geological strata, telling of old upheavings of volcanic fire : or broken mosaic pavement in an ancient house-ruin, where wave-like earth tremors, at some time, have run beneath the builder's masonry. Once the lines of Hosea's thought were straight enough. Indeed, as much as any of his predecessors he had a logical sense of the Divine working. At the same time he was both in spirit and in form a poet. Nearly all his book is in metre, and poetry lends itself to concentration.

Now the most outstanding feature of Hebrew poetry is its system of parallel expression, as in Hosea's couplet :

*They set up kings, but not by me,
They made princes, but I did not approve* (viii. 4).

The influence of this method upon the mind that employed it must always have been considerable. The continual quest of alternative phrases would strengthen perception of similarities in diversity, with definite consequences for religious thinking. It must have often suggested action and reaction in the moral sphere, correspondences of spiritual things with spiritual, and have led ultimately to the suggestion that invisible realities may be reached through the things that are seen.

Instances of the first of these consequences may be observed in Hosea's use of the formula, *As . . . so* : for example, *As they increase, so they sin* (iv. 7). (*As*)¹ *they* (i.e. the prophets) *called them, so they* (i.e. Israel) *went away from them.*² Hosea perceived one process met and measured by another. From this arose the idea of spiritual law. That, perhaps, is the first great feature of Hosea's writing. He is full of the law of God, the law written *not in stone tablets, but in tablets that are human hearts* (2 Cor. iii. 3). The inevitableness of this law is always confronting us in Hosea's prophecy. Sometimes it is set forth under the imagery of sowing and reaping. *They sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind* (viii. 7). *Sow for yourselves righteousness : reap the fruit of love.*³

¹ *As* not in the Hebrew, but implied.

² xi. 2 ; cf. also x. 1, xiii. 6.

³ x. 12 ; Professor Harper's translation in the *International Critical Commentary*.

In making covenants they speak mere words, empty oaths. Therefore judgment springs up like a poisonous weed in a ploughed field (x. 4), falsity in men's treatment of each other being answered by the ruin of whatever is honest in their other undertakings. There follows the great truth of the reaction of men's worship, whatever it be, upon the soul of the worshipper. They consecrated themselves to the shameful thing, and they became detestable like the object of their love (ix. 10). And with terrifying imagery the prophet declares God's counter-movement upon their souls : Because he was determined to follow vanity,¹ therefore am I as a moth to Ephraim and as rottenness to the house of Judah (v. 11, 12). That is the position described by our Lord in the words, If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness (St. Matt. vi. 23) ; and, If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not sinned (St. John xiv. 22).

God is never negligible. If He is not the Redeemer, He is the Destroyer. If His goodness is not a leading to repentance it is a provocation to further sin. Sin, indeed, is only less sure in its working than God. Hosea has a profound conviction that sin is a slave-master. *Their malpractices, he says, will not permit them to return to their God : for the spirit of whoredom is in them and they know not Yahweh (v. 4).* When the very spirit of whoredom is in a man he is fascinated, permeated by whoredom. Then, whatever he is thinking about, or whomever he is thinking about, there is a quick side-slipping of his running thought into that particular sin. So Browning writes—

¹ The reading of the Greek and of the Syriac.

I soon became aware, flocked the infinitude
Of passions, loves and hates, man pampers till
his mood
Becomes himself.¹

What at one time had been merely a mood—a passing phase of sinful feeling—becomes the whole man. Then is indeed the spirit of his sin in him. Hosea seems to have seen such cases amongst his contemporaries. Doubtless he read the guilty hearts of many men aright. And there was a woman near to him whom he read yet more clearly.

That ugly word *whoredom* occurs eight times in his short book. It haunts his brain. Mostly he uses it as a figure of speech for Israel's faithlessness to her God. It was a common thought with devout Hebrews that Israel was the bride of Yahweh. Hence sin against Him was described in terms of sexual relationship. But there is a deeper reason for this haunting metaphor, one that opens to us Hosea's sadly troubled heart and all the sorrow of a desolate home, where were three little children in a condition worse than motherless. The story of that home has often been told, but, perhaps, something remains to be said as to the prophet's share in the making of the tragedy.

He had a highly susceptible nature, much impressionability. His eye was quick for beautiful things—for colour and for outline, for gesture and for movement. A collection of his metaphors and similes reveals this artistic quality of temperament. The furrows of a field, the foam blown from the breakers on the seashore, smoke from chimney-pots, animal and bird, the dew and the cloud, the lily,

¹ *Fifine at the Fair.*

the olive and the vine, the scent of pine trees, the rushing skirts or wings of the wind—such pictures abound in his brief scripture. And with all this he was evidently a lover both of little children and of animals. How revealing of the man is that passage in chapter xi. 3 and 4, of God's dealings with Israel. *I taught Ephraim to walk: I took them in my arms.* There speaks the lover of child-life, the man who, whatever tremendous vocation be laid upon him, finds time and tenderness enough to teach a baby its first steps. And again, *I was to them as one who lifts up the yoke from upon their jaws, and I inclined unto him and would give him to eat.*¹ No man who was not a lover of animals would have conceived that simile. Hosea must often have felt in himself the gratitude of his ox, when he fed it and watched it contentedly sniffing and munching its bundle of hay.

Now a man of this sensibility could never go through life without much risk to happiness. We may say of him as Sir William Watson has written of Robert Burns :

How could he 'scape the doom of such
As feel the airiest phantom-touch
Keenlier than others feel the clutch
Of iron powers,—
Who die of having lived so much
In their large hours ?

And in particular we may say of this Hebrew poet, as might be said only too fully of the Scots poet, that a man of this temperament could never go through life and miss the charm of woman's beauty.

¹ Professor Harper's translation in the *International Critical Commentary*.

There have been men of God who in their immense preoccupation with their work have married, as did Richard Hooker the *injudicious* (in this respect), for convenience rather than for communion. The resulting unhappiness in such a case arises naturally enough from a lack of proper harmony in the man himself, man of God though he be. He has forgotten, or never perceived, the fulness of human nature, the complexity of both flesh and spirit, and the lawful demands of every instinct. But the man of God who has the artistic temperament never makes this mistake. He has an eye for physical as well as for spiritual things. If he marry, as he is fairly sure to do, he will give liberty to his native feeling of delight in human beauty. His marriage may then be his supreme blessing. But if it is not that it is likely to be his complete undoing. In Browning's *Fifine at the Fair*, from which I have already made quotation, there is given the picture of a man of keen and educated mind and of a sensibility like that of Hosea who, although thus evidently refined in nature, is fascinated by the physical qualities of a girl-acrobat seen at a country fair in France. That may appear to the reader an unlikely infatuation. Yet in sexual relationships there is often some hidden ground, or psychical sub-way, between two people of entirely different habits of outward life, an element in the more refined of the two which the world seldom suspects. One recalls how John Donne, at a time when he was impressing educated society with his acumen in theological discussion, wrote poems of the frankest animalism. And there is reason to believe that Browning's poem was based upon a real experience.

Was then Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, just such another as Fifiue, not indeed an acrobat, but a dancer in countryside merriments, at the vintage harvests, or in religious functions such as those of Shiloh in the days of the Judges (Judges xxi. 20-21)? Coming upon some such scene, perhaps even directing it all, was Hosea caught and bound by the spell of the swift radiant movements of this girl, by the beauty of that garlanded head with its dower of tresses glossy in the golden light of sunset, and by the richness of a voice that overflowed the precincts of the place and fell like a fountain from hill to vale? The prophets of Yahweh had their youth and their hot blood and were men of like passions with their fellows. Chance, Luck, Providence—however we name that curious moulding up of spirit with circumstances which has so much to do with personality—may have played some part in the betrothal of the prophet and his bride.

I see, men's judgments are
A parcel of their fortunes ; and things outward
Do draw the inward quality after them,
To suffer all alike.¹

However this may have been, one thing is clear. The fatal attraction of Gomer for Hosea moved upon an underlying sensuousness in both. But what in him remained a sensuousness, in her became a sensuality. One can believe that Gomer rejoicing in the love of so esteemed a man would be ready at first to conform to all his desires as to her deportment, content to bind him to herself

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. xiii.

with some oft-chanted love-songs like the immortal *Song of Songs* :

*Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm,
For love is strong as death ;
Relentless as Sheôl is jealousy.*

*Many waters cannot quench this love,
And rivers cannot wash it away (viii. 6, 7).*

But Gomer proved unfaithful to the marriage tie. The glamour of her beauty, mingled, as I have thought, with gifts of song and of wit, whilst daily enthralling her husband's graver nature, was unsustained by any steadfastness of religious purpose. Probably she was disappointed in him. Probably, like Tennyson's Guinevere, she craved more colour in her husband's affections than he was willing to reveal. In married life especially we need

The ostentation of our love, which, left unshown,
Is often left unlov'd.¹

Possibly her very influence upon him checked his daily God-seeking, and seemed to him a thing to be resisted. Thus temptation would come to her because he thrust it from himself. However that may be, it did come and she fell.

Some ten years after their marriage Gomer left her husband and fled to another. Weeks and months, possibly years, went by, during which Hosea had to be mother as well as father to his children. Then, one day, strange tidings reached him, or perhaps it fell out, as in that stirring picture of Millais entitled 'Found,' that in the course of

¹ *Antony and Cleopatra*, III. vi.

his journeyings the prophet himself made a discovery. Somehow, somewhere, somewhen, he came face to face with his lost wife. She had become a slave—the sorrow-bedraggled steps and stages of her descent are untold—and a cheap slave, and was for sale to any man who wanted a drudge or a concubine. *So I bought her for fifteen silver shekels, and fifteen shekels' worth of barley. And I said to her, Stay quietly many days for me : thou shalt not be a harlot : be nothing to any man : and I will be the same for thee* (iii. 2, 3).

There the story ends. As Hosea tells it, one might imagine that from the first he knew the nature of the woman he had married, and, indeed, that he was divinely directed to marry a woman of ill-fame. But that would be too literal a reading of the prophet and would involve us in questionable conceptions as to what God was to writers of the eighth century B.C. The Old Testament often virtually telescopes the various stages of a process so that the cause and the effect are spoken of as one.¹

The command to Hosea, *Go take unto thee a harlot as wife* (i. 2) can only mean that the woman, whom Hosea felt God was leading him to marry, later on revealed a wanton disposition. At the time he married her his hopes were probably as high as those of any other bridegroom, though it may well be that his choice was too little motivated by any ideal of complete companionship. When the blow fell upon him it must have seemed impossible to think that there had been any Divine leading in his marriage. Yet he loved her still, and longed to

¹ *E.g.* Isaiah vi. 9-10. *Make the heart of this people fat, etc. :* records a command to preach in the light of the preacher's subsequent experience of the effect of his preaching.

make her his own again. And afterwards when he was old and had come to take stock of his life and to re-read his old poems, the music of their technique, *As so*, seemed to bring echoes from the stars. He read the patience of God in his own patience with Gomer. And then the question arose, could the truth of that Heavenly patience have come home to him without his sorrows? Could the light have been revealed in its chorded beauty without the interposed prism of a broken heart? And if a public shame had been the means of opening to men the love of God, could that shame have been outside the scope of the Divine Sovereignty? So upon the fact of the Will of God he rebuilt his assurance of that Providence that 'embraces all accidents, converting them to good.'

To us, moreover, reading his experience in the light reflected by his literary style, it would appear that he was not simply used by God, but himself redeemed in the using. That disposition in him to which a woman of Gomer's type could and did appeal, perhaps was not wholly an untainted love of sense-impressions. Only suffering upon suffering can cleanse the soul that too fondly cherishes the desires of the eye. What he came to see and believe reveals God as not only his refuge and his comforter but as his refiner too.

So he was able to speak of God as God had never before been shewn to men. For in his conception of the Divine Love Hosea advanced beyond all earlier prophets. He carries us into the holy place and builds an altar for a sin-offering there. No one before him spoke as he did of *khesedh*—love, loving-kindness, mercy, leal-love (as Sir G. A. Smith renders it). This to Hosea was the final quality of

God, and he believed it so because it was the final quality of his own heart. God needed the warm, sense-delighting nature of this man, in its suffering under the blows of human faithlessness, ere He could unveil to Israel and to the world His own unyielding redeeming love.

And there is surely a valid argument from such a suffering love as Hosea's—despite any element of impurity in it needing to be cleansed—and the love of the Eternal.

He that planted the ear shall He not hear ?

Or He that formed the eye not see ? (Ps. xciv. 9).

In a noble passage of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest* (chapter xix), Richard Baxter says, ' Shall I dare to contend in love with Thee ; or set my borrowed, languid spark against the element and sun of love ? Can I love as high, as deep, as broad, as long as love itself ; as much as He that made me, and that made me love, that gave me all that little which I have ; both the heart, the hearth where it is kindled, the bellows, the fire, the fuel and all were His. As I cannot match Thee in the works of Thy power, nor make, nor preserve, nor guide the world ; so why should I think any more of matching Thee in love ? ' Robert Browning, who in his vast range of reading must surely have read Baxter (and here, indeed, to much profit), puts the same cogent question into the mouth of David after his singing to Saul :

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate
gift,

That I doubt his own love can compete with it ?

Here, the parts shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end,
what Began ?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for
this man,

And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who
yet alone can ?

The argument holds. Human souls have existed and do exist who have met faithlessness with a deathless affection. Such as these shew us God. Chief of all these is the New Testament Man of Sorrows. His love lies patently yet unparadingly in the Gospel pages. Hosea's supreme word *khesedh*—*kindness* was more than once upon His lips. *Go and learn what this means, I delight in kindness, and not sacrifice, The knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings* (St. Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7). Learn its meaning, He said. To Him evidently it summed up a world of truth. His own learning of it was a life-long meditation, upholding Him amidst all disappointments, enabling Him to endure not only, as our old English version runs, *a contradiction of sinners against himself* (Hebrews xii. 3), but what for Love is harder still, *a contradiction of sinners against themselves* (R.V.)—the spectacle of a moral disruption, of souls going to pieces under the disintegrating force of unbridled passion. All that amazement and horror in Gethsemane of which we read were the fruit of a love like Hosea's for his fallen wife, a love which clung passionately to sinners and yet also supremely to God. And the triumphant issue of the Cross was Love's victory over the evil it was forced to see, Love which can abide more than Hosea's *many days*, waiting in the large leisure of the Eternal for the wanderer's full reinstatement at home.

VIII

JOSIAH

*So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
 ' This rage was right i' the main,
 ' That acquiescence vain :
' The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.'*

*For more is not reserved
To man with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day :
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.
 BROWNING (Rabbi Ben Ezra).*

ON a day, or during some night, in the year 640 B.C., King Amon of Judah, being but twenty-four years of age, saw fixed upon himself hot eyes as of tigers in an Indian jungle and uplifted hands that menaced him with death. He fell hideously wounded, and in a moment his spirit was stamped out of his body, as men stamped the juice out of grapes in the winepress. They who did this thing were his own palace servants, how motivated one knows not, except negatively, that they represented no popular movement outside the court. Through the shadowy passages of the palace out into *the garden of Uzza* they carried the corpse and buried it in a tomb beside the tomb of Amon's father, Manasseh, and then betook themselves to counsel. Such men seldom look far beyond the immediate expression of their enmity, and generally the reflex of their crime paralyses their next step. While Amon's murderers nervously consulted together, tidings of his death were being spread in all the lanes and corners of Jerusalem. The citizens took up arms and came together in streams that swelled to a vast sea beating upon the hastily barricaded palace-doors. It cannot have been long before this excited human tide broke the defences down. Short and sharp was the battle within the royal precincts. Every one of the king's murderers was killed.

Early marriages have ever been common in the East. When only a lad of fifteen Amon had married

a girl named Jedidah, *the beloved*, or *the darling*, belonging to an obscure village on the borders of the Shephelah plain. Her name tells us that some human fondness had early brought the gift of love into her soul, and after her marriage, that gift, reinforced by somewhat tear-laden memories of her childhood's country home, perhaps helped to mould her little son Josiah in habits of truth and purity. It would scarcely be his father who suggested the name he bore, for Amon had forsaken *Yahweh, the God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of Yahweh* (2 Kings xxi. 22), while *Josiah* means *Yahweh supports*. There is the thought of a Divine buttress in the word. Behind the child's life, and all through whatever years are appointed him, there will be needed that immeasurable buttress whose foundations deepen into the Infinite, a buttress that can take all the thrust of the most high-built life. Surely when the people of the land made Josiah king in his father's stead, he being but eight years old and still calling for Jedidah's loving care, it was much that his very name should remind him of yet greater help than hers, and should continually speak of the holy God Yahweh as the background and support of his very self. For the general condition of the time was evil. Idolatrous images stood in the Temple. Upon many a housetop in Jerusalem were altars to the sun and moon and stars. The cries of children carried to sacrificial death rose from the Valley of Hinnom. Society was lawless. The judges perverted justice. The prophets were mostly plausible. The priests were careless. So the eyes of the young king looked out upon a world estranged from the God whom his mother worshipped. And always with him was

that dark hour, when he saw his father's body carried out to burial, and watched the women cleansing the palace floors from blood. As he dwelt upon this and learnt more of the manner of his father's life, the evils Amon had permitted and the despite he had done to Yahweh's name, a deep sense of the law of retribution pervaded the young king's mind. Yahweh had requited the sinner according to his sin. Thus by one terrifying experience in his most formative days Josiah was prepared for that later teaching which he was to employ in a public reformation of Religion.

His position and subsequent achievement were not unlike the fortunes of another boy-king, the fourteenth-century Pharaoh Akhenaten (or Ikhnaton) whose name possesses religious distinction. This remarkable ruler was only twelve or thirteen years of age when he succeeded to the throne. Several years passed before he set his hand to effect those religious changes which issued at length in the establishment of a creed and a worship loftier than Egypt had ever known, and involving conceptions which pointed to, if they did not actually declare, a monotheistic faith of almost New Testament quality. To both Akhenaten and Josiah, moving slowly under the regency of their mothers, the years which immediately preceded action were full of religious thinking. In each case the Spirit of God slowly opened a way of reform in the national worship, and strengthened youthful idealism for the hour of a great adventure. Akhenaten, breaking away from Thebes, founded a purer worship in a new city of his own building, 'the City of the Horizon,' and led men to conceive of

the supreme Deity as a God, not of war but of beneficence.

The hour of action for Josiah, although prepared for by his father's death and his own religious upbringing, was determined by an event which created profound sensation throughout the court. At that time the Temple in Jerusalem had fallen into disrepair. Like old St. Paul's before the Great Fire of London, it had been neglected and profaned. The wear and tear of some 330 years had told upon the structure, and extensive stone- and timber-work were found necessary. Josiah seems to have exercised a close superintendence over this undertaking. One day his Chancellor of the Exchequer announced to him that the High-Priest had found a book amidst the disorder of the sacred precincts. This proved to be a *book of the law*, or *the book of the covenant*, as it is also named. Now the Pentateuch contains at least three different codes of law, and the question is which of these was the one that thus came to light. The reformation, which Josiah immediately proceeded to effect in obedience to the provisions of the book shewn him, falls so closely into line with the code in Deuteronomy that most Hebrew scholars have no hesitation in regarding this scripture, though it may be in a briefer form than we now possess, as the book in question.

The authorship of Deuteronomy is unknown. Although called in our English versions 'the Fifth Book of Moses,' it speaks of Moses in the third person and narrates his death. Moreover in many ways it reflects conditions which did not arise in the national life until long after the Conquest of Canaan. Where it appears to give us the actual teaching of

Moses we cannot be sure it is really quoting his words. The Hebrew speech has no method of indirect utterance such as we employ. Hence the Old Testament writers often have the appearance of reporting the very words of those of whom they are telling us, when sometimes that cannot have been their intention. For this reason it is quite needless to suppose that in Deuteronomy the speeches placed upon the lips of Moses were other than free compositions of the author, or authors, of this book—free, that is, within the limits of a just regard for the noble traditions with which the great leader's name was associated. And the same freedom of treatment would justify the formulation of laws as the work of Moses, if it could be believed that such laws were the embodiment of the supposed teaching of Moses. In many instances the Deuteronomic laws appear to be what is called 'case-law,' and the precedents might easily stretch back by oral tradition to Moses himself.

The circumstances of the origin of Deuteronomy have been the subject of many conjectures. An attractive theory, which, however, is still *sub judice*, has lately been advanced by Professor Welch of Edinburgh. He suggests that the book in the main was composed in the early days of the Kingdom, and identified with one of the Northern sanctuaries. This would make it a product of that United Israel movement which was briefly described in our study of Saul. Dr. Welch considers that when later under Hezekiah, and then again in the time of Josiah, an effort was made towards the restoration of national unity, many of the sacred writings which had originated in the Northern Kingdom

were brought to Jerusalem, and that amongst these was a copy of Deuteronomy. No immediate use, however, was possible at first, and thus neglected it was lost in some chamber of the Temple until the time of the repairs.¹

However it originated, when first read to Josiah this book of the law, with its strong insistence upon the supremacy of Yahweh and the penalties surely coming upon disobedience, filled him with consternation. For although ready to welcome its fundamental doctrine, naturally he would be staggered to find so much of the existing religious practice of this time condemned with an explicitness which might almost appear to have been framed with that practice in view.² Never was a religious treatise more apposite or more menacing. In deep concern of conscience Josiah sent a deputation to lay the book before the prophetess Huldah and to ask for her guidance. Huldah was attached to the court, her husband being *the keeper of the wardrobe*, an officer in whose charge were the king's state-robes and, perhaps, stores of festive garments for certain of the courtiers. Josiah must often have met and conversed with Huldah. Perhaps her influence had guided his upbringing. Her answer to the deputation confirmed the king's expectations of the Divine judgment, but closed with a definite promise that he himself should not see the coming evil: he should be gathered to his grave in peace. His life, that is, should run its normal course. He might look for his threescore years and ten. And

¹ Welch, *The Code of Deuteronomy* (p. 206 ff.) and *Jeremiah: His Time and his Work* (pp. 27-32).

² E.g. compare Deut. iv. 16, iv. 19 with 2 Kings xxi. 4-7.

the end, when it came, should be in the quiet of his palace home, his servants' hands smoothing the path of old age down to the sombre valley. It was just such an answer as in the circumstances an orthodox but kindly court-lady might be expected to send to an amiable and pious young king. Events were to prove, however, that the purlieus of kings' courts are scarcely reliable schools of the prophets.

It is authentically recorded of Akhenaten that when he launched his reform he abolished, as far as opportunity permitted, all other representations of the Deity but the one which was henceforth to symbolise the creed of Egypt—'the figure of the solar disk with outspreading rays ending in human hands'¹—a picture of a God to whom all men were dear. In the same way Josiah proceeded to suppress, as far as he was able, all religious competition with the holy and gracious Yahweh. To this end the shrines known as 'high places' were destroyed. No altar was permitted anywhere but the altar of Yahweh in the Temple. Priests who were known to practise heathen rites were executed. Those connected with the high places who, without being idolaters, were yet of dubious piety, were brought to Jerusalem and afforded maintenance, but denied rank with the Temple priesthood. Witchcraft was put away, probably not without revolting acts of cruelty. In all things Josiah aimed at making the newly found law-book authoritative both in his own kingdom of Judah and in Samaria too, the Assyrian rule over which was then fast

¹ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vii. p. 132, and *cf.* p. 40. See also *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. ii. chaps. vi. and ix.

slipping away. Some six months were occupied in making these changes and then the reform was solemnly crowned by a great celebration of the Passover, such as Israel had never known before.

In all this, no doubt, much real good was accomplished. It is, however, but seldom that zealous reformatations prove unqualified blessings. In Egypt Akhenaten's work did not long survive him. Nor did Josiah's reform really solve the religious problem of his age. All too naturally the reformer concentrated upon effecting external changes in Hebrew religion, rather than upon commending that inward piety which Deuteronomy so sublimely required of Israel.

Moreover his own response to the Deuteronomic appeal wrought in him consequences not wholly good. Busied about altars, and shrines, and priest-hoods, and decorum, the mind of Josiah inevitably leaned towards an externalisation of religious values. The kingdom of Judah was to be the kingdom of God, and this was to come with observation. The very fact that the Temple henceforth was to be the one place of public worship for his people, and that Jerusalem was thus to acquire a new importance, quickened Josiah's political instincts and ambitions. The Cleanser of the Temple was ready to arbitrate in the politics of the world. And here it was that one special influence of Deuteronomy worked upon him disastrously. For the book teaches that obedience to Yahweh's law will most surely bring external blessings, including the ability to face the foreigner with conscious national strength. *And all the peoples of the Earth shall see that Yahweh is thy Owner ;*

and they shall be afraid of thee. . . . And Yahweh shall place thee at the head, not at the tail. Thou shalt tend only upwards, not downwards (xxviii. 10-14). The Hebrew in these two last statements suggests inevitably our colloquialism of the top-dog. With such a promise ringing in his ears, and the glow of masterful activity moving in his veins, when Josiah surveyed the religious changes he had effected it was natural that he should look for some Divine vindication of himself before the eyes of other kings. Did not his own name, *Yahweh supports*, encourage such an expectation? And though Huldah had suggested that Israel's day of grace was past, yet might not Yahweh repent, if Israel repented first? And, again, had not the prophetess guaranteed at least this, that his own life was secure for a long time to come, he being not yet forty years old? To our Lord, Satan once vainly quoted a psalmist's assurance of safety in a heady adventure. To Josiah, Satan came with similar subtlety, and succeeded.

There were great stirrings amongst the peoples of the Near East in the beginning of the seventh century B.C. The power of Assyria was declining and enemies multiplied against her. In the year 608 Necho, King of Egypt, advanced up the coast of Palestine to join in the conflict, whether for or against Assyria we do not clearly know.¹ Circumstances seemed to Josiah to favour his intervention. Was not the moment opportune for an assertion that Judah was no negligible factor in world-politics? Moreover the military position was

¹ The question has been discussed lately by Professor Welch in the Introduction to his colloquial translation of *The Book of Jeremiah* (pp. 5, 6), and in his *Jeremiah*, chapter ii. It is immaterial for the subject of this book.

tempting. From the central mountains Hebrew patrols could watch and often harass the advance of the Egyptian army. Narrow and hazardous were the defiles opening upon Esdraelon. As once in our own history a British force was destroyed by the Afghans in the Khyber Pass, so it did not appear a very difficult undertaking for a small body of Josiah's highland troops to cut off the Egyptians in a similar sort of country.

The clash came, but apparently not quite where Josiah could have best sustained it. The Egyptians forced their way out into the plain, and at Megiddo inflicted upon Israel a decisive defeat. Josiah was mortally wounded. Some moments were given him in which to reflect upon the course events had taken (2 Chron. xxxv. 24). Lifted tenderly from his chariot of war to a civilian chariot, the poor arrow-pierced body made as comfortable as might be, he endured for a little the long journey south, wondering perhaps bitterly, as far as he could think at all, where was that Divine support which his zealous piety had merited, until the languid eyes saw no more the dim swimming outlines of the hills, and the clank of his horses' shod feet failed from his ears, and all Josiah's earthly journeyings were done.

The narratives of the two books of Chronicles cannot be taken as historically correct when they are incompatible with the earlier records of 1 and 2 Kings. Sometimes, however, by supplementary statements they cast a true light upon the course of events. Here the Chronicler's account of Josiah's defeat and death has a good deal to commend it. His opening phrases reflect a long prevalent feeling

in Israel. Megiddo was to the Hebrew people what Flodden was to the Scots—a national disaster to be commemorated by the minstrel's dirge and by deep heart-searchings in all loyal men of the race. In both instances defeat and death fell upon a king and his warriors through their own rashness in interfering in the quarrels of their neighbours. But why had not Josiah been kept back from his adventure? *After all this*, says the Chronicler, *when Josiah had restored the temple* (2 Chron. xxxv. 20)—after such devotion to Yahweh—came an early and bloody death, the very opposite of the peaceful end promised him by Huldah. Here was tragedy indeed, and like to be other and sorer tragedy, the tragedy of the tottering of faith in the hearts of God's people. Yet there must have been some explanation which would clear Yahweh's Name from dishonour. The light which the Chronicler shed upon the mystery may not have been an artificial light, but a real breaking of sun-rays through the dark clouds that rolled so confusedly over Megiddo. He tells us that Pharaoh Necho strove to keep Josiah out of the war. He sent ambassadors to him saying, *What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God hath given a command to speed me. Hold off from God who is with me, that he destroy thee not* (xxxv. 21). Such a message is not improbable. Once before, in Hezekiah's time, a heathen military leader sought to serve his own ends by playing upon the religious feelings of the Hebrew people (2 Kings xviii. 19–25). Similarly Necho may have sought to ward off Josiah's attack by citing the command of a God

Josiah was pledged to obey. If that were so, Josiah's persistence in war becomes significant of a religious limitation. Deuteronomy had not taught him to regard Revelation as one vast spiritual reality broader than nationalism. All the revelation Yahweh had given to foreigners was contemptuously summed up in the declaration that to them had been apportioned the sun, moon and stars as suitable objects of worship (Deut. iv. 19), from which, indeed, no *khesedh* (loving-kindness), such as Yahweh had for Israel, could ever flow. While *the stranger*, i.e. the alien who had settled among Hebrew people, was to be treated with benevolence, *the foreigner*, i.e. the trader, or traveller from other lands, who came and went without breaking with his own nation, was to be placed upon a different footing. To him the Hebrew might sell the bad meat he himself would not eat (xiv. 21), and from him exact the usury he must not ask from his fellow-countryman (xxiii. 20, cf. xv. 3). Especially in politics must Israel beware of foreign influence (xvii. 15). Always in her relations with other peoples Israel was to be *the head, not the tail*, and it is only in modern political bodies that the tail sometimes wags the head. Hence Deuteronomy knew nothing of any spiritual good or guidance likely to come to Israel through a foreign channel. So it was that Josiah's mind, moulded by the remarkable book which had been such an effective instrument of reform in his hands, turned coldly away from what purported to be a message from his God through the lips of an alien king. And because his piety thus narrowed he reaved himself of the Divine support he needed, if

he was to fulfil his true function as God's regent over Israel. The religious movement of his life failed at the point where the Spirit of God summoned him to a larger creed. Always for us men *the river of God which is full of water* seeks to hollow out larger and diverser channels. Those who would canalise it simply to their own will or straighten it into line with the Past inevitably taint its quality. Ultimately they who would narrow the manifestation of God cease to receive God.

And indeed even if it be said that the Chronicler's light upon Megiddo is of his own manufacture, at least symbolically he has given us truth. Josiah's whole adventure against Egypt unmasks that perversion which often emerges in the religious reformer when his religion is exhausted, the turning aside from the spiritual to the worldly, from the quest of the further riches of God's grace to the gauds of kings.

Foolish, weak and at last broken are the lives of even the best of men. We are swept from extreme to extreme, and sometimes individually and unashamedly admit it. Often, indeed, one may hear a man confess that because of some aggressive folly in another he himself would take the opposite course. And because of this fundamental weakness scarcely can God trust us with any considerable success; scarcely can He give us more than a modicum of His power. We are the victims of our virtues. In the heat of a righteous zeal we are swept either into fanaticism, or into a sort of spiritual imperialism. Having cleansed the temple and demolished our idols, we would regulate, by

force if need be, the quarrels of mankind, denying the possibility of any other revelation of God than that which has been vouchsafed to ourselves.

The tragedy of Akhenaten, though precisely the opposite in its circumstantial expression, possesses the same significance. One aspect of the Divine became for him an obsession. Probably it would be too much to say that he was a pacifist in the modern religious sense of the term. But his conception of God was limited to the gentler aspects of the Divine activity, and because of this he failed to assert the right to rule, where rule was required in the interests of civilisation. In him, as in the case of Josiah, the religious impulse ran its course and that right nobly, but at the critical moment failed to broaden out to the magnitude of the Spirit's calling.

Some 640 years later another Temple-cleansing was needed in Jerusalem—not of evils as gross as those Josiah put away, but of things which were both profane in themselves and significant of a widespread worldliness amongst the professed worshippers of God. It was with no hesitating hand Jesus swept the holy place clear of its sordid traffic. *His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thy house will devour me* (St. John ii. 17). Yet this one vehement action of His life did not escape the control of a will always susceptible to God. His virtue did not become an occasion of sin. Vehemence did not beget arbitrariness, nor righteous indignation the policy of force. He remained true to the Beatitudes; and it was because of His faith in a kingdom of spiritual values that He came to His Cross. Megiddo and Golgotha do not lie in the same religious latitude.

In one great respect, however, Josiah foreshewed Jesus. Our sense of the weakness of extremists must not rob them of the honour due to their main endeavour. It is lamentable when a reformer becomes an autocrat in his own proper domain ; it is tragic when he would carry his autocracy further afield. But, on the other hand, it is worst of all to be too weak to assert the will to goodness anywhere. One should rather choose to be fanatic than *fainéant*. Better perish at forty in an arbitrary adventure than never strike for right. Josiah is the weak strong-man whose weakness is that he is obsessed with his strength, but who clearly has a strength to be obsessed about. And his strength is that having certain clear-cut conceptions of Good and Evil he insists that he must act upon them.

Fundamental to all integrate happiness is it to know one's own mind. Our modern Tolerationists—'the Heaven and Hell Amalgamation Society,' as Carlyle called them—are often persons without any mental regulation. They do not know why Chemosh should not be honoured as well as Yahweh. 'Jehovah, Jove, or Lord'—the superficial phrase of Pope's 'Universal Prayer'—is their watchword. Josiah at least had eyes not too bleared to see central religious distinctions. His prompt action when the *Book of the Law* was shewn him, his fearless loyalty in executing reform—a reform which there is good reason to believe aroused strong opposition in certain quarters—will always ensure for him a place among the master-kings. The work he did had to be done if Jeremiah was to see the next step in the exploration of the truth of Religion. And Jeremiah as he

took that next step opened the path a good distance further for the feet of Christ.

Even with Josiah's tragic over-confidence and religious limitation in view, every self-respecting mind would rather stand in the Judgment with him than with the amalgamators. And our Lord's word to the Samaritan tells us He too is on the side of those who know their own minds and can discriminate the relative values of rival creeds : *You worship what you do not really know. We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews* (St. John iv. 22).

IX

JEREMIAH

*Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death.*

E. B. BROWNING (*A Vision of Poets*).



ABOUT an hour's walk from the North wall of Jerusalem, on a hillside terraced with olive and fig orchards and vineyards, lay the village of Anathoth. There, in very early times, Canaanites worshipped 'Anâth or 'Anât, a Chaldean deity. After the Conquest the Hebrews absorbed some of the religious interest of the place, much as the early Catholics absorbed Paganism, too slightly transmuting the heathen customs. But the life of the people was bound up in this primitive worship, which was largely concerned with the spirits of the land and of the fountains and of the corn. The supposed practical values of the cult made absorption, rather than extirpation, a plausible policy.

A higher religious stress was given to Anathoth when it was assigned for the residence of Hebrew priests, its proximity to Jerusalem making it specially serviceable to those who had occasional duties there. Amongst these one of the most notable was a descendant of Eli, the High Priest Abiathar. During David's old age, unhappily he took the wrong side in politics and was banished by Solomon to *his own fields* in Anathoth (1 Kings ii. 26). Abiathar handed down to his descendants not only his lands but a distinguished, if overcast name, and a keen interest in public affairs. From his family, as is reasonably believed, came the prophet Jeremiah (born about 606 B.C.), briefly introduced to us in his book as the *son of Hilkiyah, of the*

priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (i. 1). The plural form, *priests*, suggests that his home was in an ecclesiastical atmosphere, amongst men interested pre-eminently in cultus, tradition and politics. They were men, too, who must have felt a certain pride in their connection with Abiathar, such as might animate a modern clerical descendant of Archbishop Grindal, whom Queen Elizabeth for his defence of 'Propheesyings' confined to his own house. The influence of the family tradition, going back as far as Eli, who had ministered at the temple in Shiloh some twenty miles north of Anathoth, would all tend to a conservative feeling in Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah. It would strengthen the authority of local religious observances.

Jeremiah's early life must have involved close acquaintance with the village sanctuary, which, probably standing upon the site of the altar of 'Anâth, possessed all the attractions of venerability. Here gathered week by week, and for the new-moon feasts and harvest festivities, peasants and shepherds from all the surrounding district, climbing stony paths through the vineyards to the high place, bringing to the priests their sacrifices, singing joyous songs, and eating and drinking at a common meal in token of their fraternity with one another and of their community with Yahweh.

A quiet, moody boy, Jeremiah watched all these things and noted more than most lads. In his own home he learnt under Hilkiah's directions all that cultivated Hebrew priests could teach of traditional laws, of history, of the contents of a few scrolls of prophecy, and of the art of versifying. Nothing

seems to have been taught him respecting any code of sacrifice claiming to be Mosaic, for we find him later in life expressly denying, as Amos by implication had denied before him, that Yahweh had ever enjoined sacrifices upon the Israel of the Exodus (Jer. vii. 22-23 ; cf. Amos v. 25). On the other hand, he was deeply influenced by Hosea, whose collection of oracles and whose tragic story he evidently knew. Indeed Hebrew literature generally interested him, especially its poetry. Most of us in our adolescence, if of any strong sensibility, are poets. Jeremiah was no exception. His writings, particularly the earlier, often fall into that Hebrew metre which is known as the *Qinah*, and reveal true poetic feeling and keen observation.

One can read through these poems some of his youthful moods. When the day's studies and religious duties were done, he would wander out into the fields and beyond into the uncultivated wastes. Jerusalem was hidden from his home by a mountain ridge. But Ramah with its memories of Samuel was conspicuous. The hills of Ephraim filled the northern prospect. From them descended a great road carrying traffic and rumour from the world's mightiest, but now decadent empire, Assyria. Two miles to the east the land broke into the Wady Farah, leading down to the precipitous valley of Achor, a sombre and perilous region haunted by the dread story of Achan's sin and death. Further still was the green wilderness known as *the pride*, or *jungle of Jordan*, the home of lion and bear, hyaena and wolf. Beyond this again, closing the landscape, rose the wooded hills of Gilead.

Very lonely was the lad in these rambles, but he desired no companion. Intense in spirit, he found the Spiritual everywhere. In the eighteenth century of our era a Cumberland lad who like Jeremiah was to become one of his nation's greatest poet-teachers, left much to himself, often passed into moods of similar intensity. 'I was often unable to think of external things,' writes Wordsworth, 'as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.' So too the Hebrew poet in his youth knew something of those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised ;
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised.

Then he would pass into a trance and see what no prosaic companion could have seen. The world of material things—earth, rock, tree, distant hill and precipice—melted into new and fantastic shapes : the ages telescoped, and supernatural forms broke through the clouds with gigantic steps. In such a mood once, soon after his call, he fancied himself alone in a judgment-stricken world, from which even the birds had fled away, where the tilled fields were falling back into desolation and every city lay in ruins, whilst through the blackened sky reigned an awful silence following upon accomplished

doom (iv. 23-26). So the young prophet saw and wrote,

As when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

From such mystic moments Jeremiah came back to the common intercourse of life, tense in nerve, reticent in mere conversation, but with the urge of a writer eager to express a unique vision.

Probably he was still under twenty years of age when he received his call to be a prophet of Yahweh *unto the nations*. The trance was upon him and he saw Yahweh, saw at least a Hand emerging from luminous mists and felt its touch upon his lips, while a voice rang in his hearing, *Behold, this day I have set thee in authority over nations and kingdoms, to root up and to break down, to kill and to overthrow, to build and to plant* (i. 10). In this trance, as in his normal moments, he was diffident, conscious of a measureless weakness to face any public duty. He would fain have escaped from the task to which God was now calling him. For this was tremendous indeed, with a scope wider than any prophet had ever formerly entertained—a world-wide service of Yahweh, with the power of life and death over empires. And the mystery was that a sensitive, shrinking youth should be designated as one who, before ever he drew mortal breath, had been appointed to such an office.

Then out of the mists which hid the Divine Presence shot a straight twig of tender pink and white blossom. It was of an almond tree—the *wakener*, as the Hebrews called it—the first tree to break into spring bloom after winter's dearth, ever

the symbol of that newness in God's work which yields men the very marrow of spiritual life. It is the awakening God who is revealed, the God of daybreak, the God whose characteristic word is, *Behold I will do a new thing* (Isaiah xliii. 19). *Then said Yahweh unto me, Thou hast well seen : for I waken over my word to perform it* (Jer. i. 12).

Instant upon that declaration the picture vanished. Dark clouds of smoke swept down upon the beholder, then, steadying, revealed beneath them a vast caldron, tilted from the North, a caldron as of a burning mountain-crater set amid a horrid wilderness. *Then Yahweh said to me, Out of the North evil shall be blown upon all the inhabitants of the land* (i. 14). Austere the voice went on to declare the coming of Northern kings who should set their thrones *at the entrances of the gates of Jerusalem* (i. 15). And because Jeremiah recoiled from the dread commission laid upon him as the announcer of these things, there was added a promise of ultimate deliverance from the enemies he was bound to make, coupled with a stern warning against fear.

As we review this opening chapter of his book, and listen to the debate between Yahweh and Jeremiah, we are impressed with an elementary truth too often overlooked in our time. We are apt so to identify our own better thoughts with the Divine Spirit as to confuse God with ourselves. This is to go wrong at the very outset of spiritual life. It has been well said by Professor Pringle-Pattison that there is an absolute necessity in what may be called *otherness*. 'It takes two to love and to be loved, two to worship and to be worshipped. . . .

Surely, as the poet says, sweet love were slain, could differences be abolished; the most self-effacing love but ministers to the intensity of a double fruition. As in the love of man and woman, so in a great friendship the completest identification of interests and aims does not merge the friends in one; the most perfect *alter ego* must remain an *alter* if the experience is to exist, if the joy of an intensified life is to be tasted at all. . . . And when we come finally to the religious consciousness the same necessity holds' (*The Idea of God*, p. 289). That is to say, not only is God *Spirit* but a *Spirit*, and we are not only spirit and flesh, but so many individual spirits expressed in flesh, with a separateness like that of the atoms, no two of which actually touch. I love them, says Myers of his friends—

I love them, but betwixt their souls and me
Are shadowy mountains and a sounding sea.

It is essential to preserve this sense of otherness in relation to ourselves and God. One note of authentic inspiration in the Hebrew prophets is that they never spoke, as our pantheistic poets and vague hymn-writers do, of losing themselves in God. They knew that the very opposite would be true if God was to reveal Himself to them at all. In all Jeremiah's career as a servant of Yahweh, there was always the consciousness of his own individuality as a thing by itself, other than his fellow-men and other than God. And God's voice in his heart could never be confused with his own mental initiative, for were not the Divine words too often unwelcome and terrible? Inspiration never broke down the prophet's personality, but in the end

integrated it as a distinguishable unit of life. Here was to lie Jeremiah's ultimate blessedness. On the other hand, for many a long year it was this very sense of otherness in Jeremiah's religious experience which created trouble. God was there, over against him, unquestionable, all-sovereign, commanding him to face terrifying situations, giving him the support he needed for to-day but never for to-morrow. Thus it was that many an hour of trembling apprehension befell him.

Amongst the earliest prophecies of Jeremiah are poems (iv. 5-vi. 29) dealing with a devastating invasion from the North which he believed had been symbolised to him by the seething caldron. In a series of wonderful word-etchings the young poet warned his countrymen of the approach of hostile forces, barbarians of the fiercest type, such as the Scythians who somewhat later, according to a passage in Herodotus, poured South from beyond the Caucasus and the Black Sea.¹ These, Jeremiah declared, were to be the instruments of Yahweh's wrath upon Israel for her sins.

If any such enemies did actually appear at this time they certainly did no more than rudely brush along Judah's borders. Now this absence of political confirmation for his predictions involved serious consequences for Jeremiah. To what extent his early poems were known is of course uncertain, but as far as they circulated they must have compromised his prophetic repute at the very beginning of his career. It was a more serious matter that he

¹ Whether Jeremiah actually indicated the Scythians is very doubtful. Professor Welch regards Jeremiah's pictures of the Northern foe as Apocalyptic (*Jeremiah: His Time and his Work*, chap. vi.).

himself should be somewhat disconcerted. Had he misread the vision, or had Yahweh deceived him? What foundation had he for future utterance, if the Divine word could so far fail? Some sense of the precariousness of his vocation must have resulted from this effort to paint lurid pictures of approaching doom. An echo of such a mood meets us in words written much later under the influence of fresh disappointment, *Thou hast enticed me, Yahweh, and I let myself be enticed. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. All day long I am a laughing-stock! Every one mocketh me* (xx. 7).

Notwithstanding this fiasco in prophecy, the times were full of apprehension, and Jeremiah's warning words probably exercised some good influence upon state affairs. There were those around the young King Josiah who were eager for a reform which, beginning with the national worship, should give direction also to national policy in foreign affairs. An opportune incident about this time set the reform in motion.

The discovery of a law-book in the Temple which, as related in our last study, is generally believed to have been some form of Deuteronomy, led King Josiah to reorganise public worship. The most prominent feature of the reform was the abolition of the 'high places' and the concentration of worship at Jerusalem. The zeal of the reforming party may be compared to the iconoclasm of our sixteenth-century Protestants in Holland and in England, when the images in parish churches were broken and picture-windows removed. Like that Puritan tornado the reform awoke fierce resentment, with which, to a certain extent, one

can sympathise. Doubtless there were many evils connected with the old shrines, but worship at these places was not wholly bad, and to the people generally they were venerable and hallowed by happy memories. There were also vital and monetary interests affected by the Reformation. Some priests were put to death. Others were transferred to Jerusalem and given a maintenance, but the stigma of degradation was upon them, and they felt it. Of all those who resented these changes the Anathoth priests were probably the most bitter. The house of Hilki'ah, with its memory of ancient dispossession from the high-priesthood, was now deprived of all opportunity in the service of Yahweh. This was a crowning insult, an intolerable wrong.

To Jeremiah the Reform created a great problem. He was much in and out of Jerusalem, roaming through its broad places and lanes, watching the various craftsmen in their covered bazaars—bakers, potters, smiths, weavers, carpenters, stone and metal workers; listening to the buzz of unending reform-talk amongst a people to whom, as to the modern Arabs, religion was the one all-dominating theme. He watched gangs of workmen removing the altars which stood at the corners of all the streets. He saw idolatrous images dragged with ropes outside the gates, to be burned in the valley of Hinnom. Probably he was present at the Great Passover in the Temple when all this reform-work was finished, and would share to some extent in the exultation and hope of those who loved Yahweh as a God infinitely beyond the possibility of any visible representation.

In judging of the extent to which Jeremiah

welcomed Josiah's Reform one has to remember that Deuteronomy, the guiding scripture in the whole movement, is more than a code of law. It is pre-eminently a great sermon upon the love and service due to Yahweh. Its legal requirements are linked up with exhortations of a most spiritual kind. The natural attitude, therefore, of such a prophet as Jeremiah would be to judge of the Reform initiated by the public reading of this scripture, according to the degree in which it embodied the more spiritual portions of the book. Any national reform which professed to be based upon Deuteronomy was entitled at least to a preliminary respect. Hence it does not seem reasonable to doubt that at first Jeremiah cordially welcomed the changes made in ritual. Indeed there are traces both of the thought and of the phrasing of Deuteronomy in his own writings, and there is one passage at least the surface meaning of which is "that he gave the Reform public support (xi. 1-8).

At first it would appear unlikely that in so doing he was running any risk. Amongst the many distinguished men around Josiah—priests, prophets, courtiers—Jeremiah at this time was no very impressive person. When Deuteronomy was first brought to light he was not consulted. If therefore he ventured to speak in approval of the Reform, any hostile party in Jerusalem itself might contemptuously pass him by as a young prophet whose earlier venture upon public notice, at the time of the war-scare, had rather discredited him in practical affairs. Some, however, of those who listened to his Jerusalem deliverances were men of

his own town; and they were greatly angered. They plotted his murder. And when Jeremiah unmasked this before them they shouted back, *Thou shalt not prophesy in Yahweh's name, that thou die not by our hand* (xi. 21). And Jeremiah retorted with indiscriminate imprecation.

From that hour the prophet's career was embittered with fear and hatred in his own soul, mitigated by lucent moments of pure sorrow over his people's sins, and by the most remarkable communion with God ever recorded in this world's history. Remarkable this was in its emphatic quality of otherness—two voices in strange debate, accusation and rebuke, pathetic pleading and answering grace. Angrily Jeremiah demanded of God that his would-be murderers should receive no mercy. *Drag them away like a flock for slaughter* (xii. 3), he cried. And then Yahweh shewed His servant that the Anathoth conspiracy was but a slight trouble compared with what awaited him in Jerusalem! *If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how canst thou hotly contend with horsemen? And if in the quiet countryside thou takest to flight, what wilt thou do in the Jungle of Jordan?* (xii. 5).

It is a horrible moment, indeed, when one who loves his home and his kindred discovers that his love is met by hatred. Jeremiah was an outcast from all the scenes and associations of his early life, while rougher voices still were to oppose him in the capital. Stoning, beating, the stocks, the dungeon and, at last, death in exile were his lot. For if at first it was his sympathy with Reform which drew upon him the hatred of Anathoth, a deeper misery

awaited him in the fact that all too soon (for his own comfort) he saw that Reformation was not Regeneration, and that by the latter alone Israel could be saved. Hence, having antagonised those whom the Reform dispossessed, he now was involved in a far fiercer conflict with those who were carrying it out.

It was at once his moral greatness and his cross that he came to see so clearly through the superficial religion of his time—the ritual reforms and the unchanged heart. The word of Yahweh was laid upon him, an unwelcome word that exposed men's sins and called for repentance. If they repented not, the message ran, the Chaldeans would come and destroy their city and carry them into captivity. Thus as the glorious hopes excited by the publication of Deuteronomy faded away, Jeremiah did not spare his hearers. It became evident to him that the reform was simply building up a new unreality. Men were now reckoning upon the restored splendours of the Temple, rather than upon obedience to Yahweh's moral law, as a guarantee of their salvation. And he mocked their phrasy and perky piety: *Trust ye not in deceptive words saying, The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh are these* (vii. 4). For that Temple should become like the temple at Shiloh, a desolate ruin, except the people repented and ceased their abominations (vii. 12).

There can be no wonder that this stern preaching with its edge of mockery, however well warranted by the sins of the time, was little calculated to *redeem Israel from all his iniquities*. Jeremiah arrayed against himself priests and prophets, many of the

common people, some of the statesmen and, especially, Josiah's successor, Jehoiakim. Nor can we wonder that when the Chaldeans did come and invest Jerusalem, to many he seemed an enemy of his country, one who basely weakened the hands of brave men in their battle for national independence. As we read his story, with that mind which Christ our Lord has wrought in us, our compassions flow out to both prophet and people. The ills he denounced were grave ; in the main his counsel was right ; but did he not exaggerate, or, like Elijah, overlook the many thousands who had not bowed the knee to Baal? *Scour¹ the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in its squares, if you can find a man, if there be any one who acts justly and tries to be honest, and I will pardon her* (v. 1). That is a shrill saying. Shrillness, indeed, is a quality in Jeremiah's speaking which meets us again and again. There is tenderness in him too. In fact shrillness and tenderness were the reverse and obverse of the same fundamental quality—the femininity of his nature. His feelings were strong and they dominated his thinking. The tides of sensibility in his soul were never normal : they were surging spring-tides. He passed quickly from passionate anger to the deepest sorrow.

The indications of this feminine element in Jeremiah may be seen, not only in his vehemence, but in the literary qualities of his writings. Thus Dr. Peake has drawn attention to his dislike of the desert, the jungle and the sea, and also to the comparative absence of military metaphors (as

¹ *Scour* is Dr. Moffatt's happy translation. The literal rendering is *Go eagerly through*.

apart from descriptions of military events).¹ He shrank even in thought from what was horrible in life, not because he was cowardly, but because upon his impressionable nature the horrible inflicted more pain than upon most men. Once, under the threat of death, he prevaricated, for Death was terrible to him (xxxviii. 24-28). In another mood there came upon him a weariness of all life. He could have entered into Robert Burns' pathetic outcry, 'O for a little of the cart-horse part of human nature.'² He lamented *Woe to me ! my mother, that you have borne me a man of strife and a man of quarrel, to all the earth* (xv. 10). Here lay the confession that the trouble between himself and his people was in part temperamental. It is a quality of femininity that it lengthens rather than broadens outlook. The women-saints see the heights of goodness, but their eyes tire in searching the great plains of actual human endeavour. Their judgments of God are apt to be more just than their judgments of mankind.

Femininity is not necessarily weakness, and when the feminine, as distinguished from the effeminate, is set in manhood, it creates contentiousness of the sharpest kind. It seemed, indeed, as though Jeremiah had been born for strife not only with his fellows but with himself. Although at first sympathetic with Deuteronomy, the dogmatic quality of that great scripture provoked him to scepticism. In opposition to its express teaching upon rewards and punishments Jeremiah challenged his God : *Righteous art thou, Yahweh, when I complain unto thee :*

¹ *Century Bible, Jeremiah*, vol. i. pp. 52, 54, 56.

² *Letters to Clarinda*, viii.

yet would I discuss judgements with thee. Why is it the way of the wicked succeeds? Why are all they at peace who deal very treacherously? Thou plantest them. Yes, they take root. They grow. Yes, they yield fruit. Thou art near to their mouth, and far from their feelings (xii. 1, 2). Sometimes doubt grew to an appalment. In his first preaching he had charged upon Israel the evil of forsaking Yahweh, *the fountain of living waters*, and of hewing out for themselves broken cisterns that could hold no water (ii. 13). But in that sad moment of his crying-out upon his mother that she had borne him, there came the fear that after all Yahweh might be no living fountain at all, at least for him: *Wilt thou indeed be unto me as deceitful waters, not to be relied upon?* (xv. 18).

Yet it was precisely this delicate scepticism, this searching, considering spirituality which gave him his function as God's servant. Was it not the feminine element in his nature which made him the prophet of the New Covenant? That element indeed often quickens discovery. The influence of women on the progress of knowledge, according to Henry Thomas Buckle, has been a creative influence operating through deductive processes and the imagination. 'Their turn of thought, their habits of mind, their conversation, their influence, insensibly extending over the whole surface of society, and frequently penetrating its intimate structure, have, more than all other things put together, tended to raise us into an ideal world, lift us up from the dust in which we are too prone to grovel and develop in us those germs of imagination which even the most sluggish and apathetic understandings

in some degree possess.'¹ All this, he affirms, has helped to win for men even their scientific discoveries, which are more often due to a sudden spring of the imagination than to severe trains of reasoning. If, indeed, we may offer any modification of this striking pronouncement, it must be to emphasise the value of work done by men in whom is implanted a heightened sensibility such as is more commonly found in women.

Jeremiah was of this type, and spiritually he became the greatest discoverer before Christ. At a time when human life around him seemed the very contradiction of God, he saw new truth. Through doubt he rose to a higher faith, through disillusionment to reality. The failure of reform by legislation but led him to seek some other working of God's Spirit. He held to that logic of faith which Browning expresses in *Abt Vogler*.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's
evidence

For the fulness of the days? Have we withered
or agonised?

Why else was the pause prolonged but that
singing might issue thence?

Why rushed the discords in but that harmony
should be prized?

God would not ultimately fail His servant, nor allow His own sovereign purposes to be defeated. The only true inference from the breakdown of the old covenant of external law was the coming of a new covenant of inward law. If the vessel were marred in the hand of the potter he would make

¹ *Buckle's Miscellaneous and Posthumous Works*, vol. i. pp. 55-75.

it again, but not the same design ; he would make it another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it (xviii. 1-6). And the new design should effect the original will. The Law which had once been expressed in statutes, written on stone and parchment, should now be a knowledge of God, written in the inward parts and in a man's very heart (xxxi. 31-34). So Jeremiah's far-lengthened vision looked on to that spiritual religion, the religion of the New Covenant, which was wrought out by our Lord in His Teaching and Healing and Passion.

If this be, indeed, as we hold, Jeremiah's noblest achievement in vision, twin-triumph therewith is the fidelity of his martyrdom. For whether or not he actually suffered a violent death in Egypt at the hands of fellow-exiles, as tradition avers, his prophetic career became more and more a witness through suffering to the suffering heart of God. Here the example and teaching of Hosea helped him. He read his own emotion in those heights of sky to which his faith looked up. Never prophet more *sympathised*, if the word may be used in its strict meaning, with God. None but Jesus Himself ever entered so fully into the Sorrow of God.¹ Specially illuminative in this connection is the passage which tells us of the complaining of Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch. Baruch had to share his master's travail, and once, as he wrote, his spirit sagged under the strain. *Woe is me now ! he cried, for Yahweh has added grief to my pain ; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest* (xlv. 3). To which Jeremiah replied with this word of

¹ Read ii. 4-13, ii. 31-32, viii. 7, xxxi. 20.

Yahweh : *Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am uprooting.* Jeremiah felt that neither Baruch's grief nor his own could be as tense as the grief of God. With His own hands God had to pull down what with infinite labour He had built up. At such risk to the Creator had moral freedom been implanted in the creature. Doubtless this in its crudeness was to reduce God from the heights of Infinity to the dimensions of a man. Yet is there anything in the whole range of the Old Testament more nobly suggestive? Mysterious as the conception of a repenting and suffering God must ever be, it yet strengthens us to face the moral evil of the world with the determination to overcome it.

It remains to ask, Did Jeremiah achieve any co-ordination of these two triumphant convictions—the perception that God's law would have to be written in man's heart, and the recognition of a Divine suffering through man's sin? We cannot tell, but to us it is clear that the juxtaposition of these two beliefs suggests the fundamental congruity of the Divine and the Human. It lifts our minds to that large exhortation which betokens not only congruity but interpenetration—*Abide in Me, and I in you.* Here would lie for Jeremiah—did not the Spirit lead him within a very little of this?—the harmony of those religious discords which, earlier in life, clung like echoes and re-echoes about his sense of individuality. For if the recognition of otherness is fundamental to our life with God, there is that also in our life which is higher than foundations and for which foundations exist. There is a truth of which Pantheism is a clumsy first

sketch. At the last is not God to be all in all? May it not be as Swinburne sings in his *Hymn of Man* :

Our lives are as pulses or pores of
his manifold body and breath,

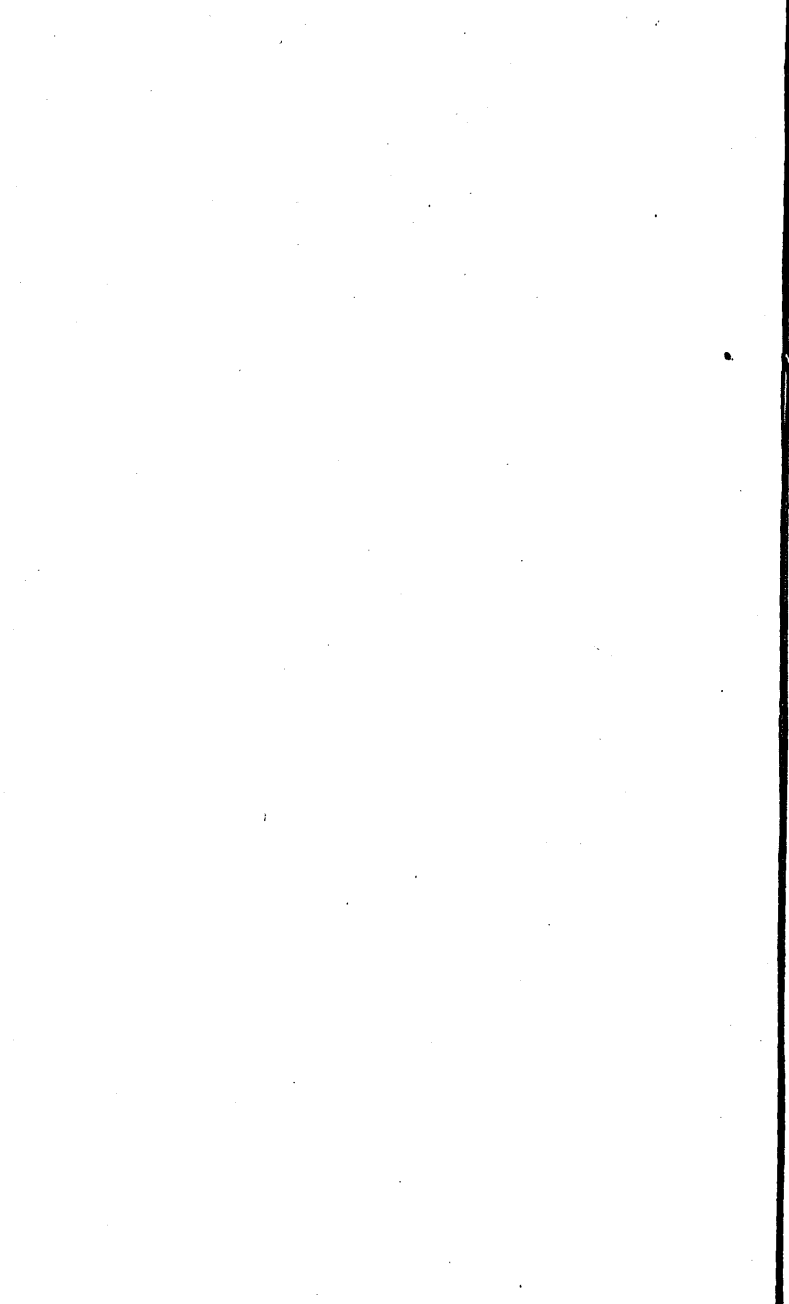
—each having its own distinctiveness and function,
yet each also beating and moving in a rhythm
of the whole? *Of him and through him and unto him
are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.*

X

JOB

La grandeur de la nature humaine consiste en une contradiction qui a frappé tous les sages et a été la mère féconde de toute haute pensée et de toute noble philosophie ; d'une part la conscience affirmant le droit et le devoir comme des réalités suprêmes ; d'une autre, les faits de tous les jours infligeant à ces profondes aspirations d'inexplicables démentis. De là une sublime lamentation qui dure depuis l'origine du monde, et qui jusqu'à la fin des temps portera vers le ciel la protestation de l'homme moral. Le poème de Job est la plus sublime expression de ce cri de l'âme. Le blasphème y touche à l'hymne ou plutôt il est un hymne lui-même, puisqu'il n'est qu'un appel à Dieu contre les lacunes que la conscience trouve dans l'œuvre de Dieu.

RENAN (*Le Livre de Job*).



I

THE Old Testament Revision brought home to most English readers the fact that the debates between Job and the other speakers in this book are carried on in verse. The poetical forms employed mostly fall into couplets with certain well-defined stresses. Hebrew poetry, however, is always what we moderns know as 'free verse.' It never aims at such polished diction as Pope's *Essay on Man*, or Gray's *Elegy*. This is not always sufficiently recognised. Sir George Adam Smith has rendered valuable service by emphasising the deliberate character of many of the irregularities in Hebrew poetry generally. 'In all forms of Eastern art,' he says, 'we trace the influence of what we may call Symmetriphobia, an aversion to absolute symmetry which expresses itself in more or less arbitrary disturbances of the style or pattern of the work. The visitor to the East knows how this influence operates in weaving and architecture. But its opportunities are more frequent, and may be used more gracefully, in the art of poetry. For instance, in many an Old Testament poem in which a single form of metre prevails there is introduced at intervals, and especially at the end of a strophe, a longer and heavier line, similar to what the Germans call the "Schwellvers" in their primitive ballads. And this metrical irregularity is generally to the profit of the

music and of the meaning' (*Jeremiah*, p. 35). The Hebrew poets would never have understood the modern feeling of Art for Art's sake. They used poetic forms as long as these did not call for too much consideration. Directly one had to pause to adapt thought to form, the white heat of the higher thinking was likely to cool. Better, it seemed, to violate rules of composition than to lose aught of the Divine Fire. Indeed the flames might be constrained within furnace walls for practical ends, but who should keep rigid those leaping tongues of fire that escape from the chimney to the sky? The dislike of absolute symmetry was an instinctive recognition of the infinite quality of spiritual experience. We may apply to these Hebrew poets what Wordsworth wrote of contemplative men in general,

Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy :
Words are but under-agents in their souls ;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them.¹

In Job, perhaps more than in any other Old Testament poem, words 'are but under-agents.' We tread the verge of unspoken truths. We feel the mystical breaking-through which attests the presence of the Nameless God. It is experience such as this which Job expresses in the line, *When the secret of God was upon my tent* (xxix. 4, R.V.). What the speaker has in mind is the reality of a Divine-human friendship brooding like the Shekinah over his home. All mystical experience has an unspeakable element that lingers about the store-

¹ *The Prelude*, xiii. 271-275.

houses of memory like a clinging fragrance. It is this which Job could never express in words, which had been an enveloping and crowning glory in the happier days he once had known.

The plot of the Book of Job is clearly a fiction, but the fiction is that comprehensive form of Truth which includes within an individual form the actual experiences of many different persons. And yet while no man ever suffered exactly Job's tale of calamities, nor was restored to such double portion of prosperity, nor lived those many years before and after these things, there are many lifelike passages in the debate between his friends and himself, and we feel that a group of men did once discuss after this manner and take these different sides. Thus the opening of Zophar's second speech has the stammering eagerness of a man who is so provoked by what he has heard that he can hardly order his words aright. *Therefore, he begins, do my disquieting thoughts stir me up, and on this account am I in such a hurry* (xx. 2). Or again, listen to Eliphaz addressing Job: *Why does thy heart carry thee away, and why do thine eyes flash, that thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such speeches out of thy mouth?* (xv. 12-13). Great as the art is in Job, these and similar expressions show that the discussion is not entirely a work of imagination. Before this book could be written, some one, who represented a world of other men, had suffered intensely in sorrow and bewilderment of spirit, in cruel bodily anguish, and had submitted to being discussed by orthodox pietists.

At this point it will be well to indicate briefly the critical positions assumed in the present study. These, broadly speaking, are those adopted by the

modern English School of Higher Criticism. Everyone feels the intrusion of the young man Elihu (xxxii-xxxvii), who, when Job's friends are reduced to silence, undertakes to restate their case. His speeches are marked by occasional verbal forms of an age later than the rest of the book. We can certainly get on better without him. Again, as the text stands, while Eliphaz and Bildad speak three times, Zophar speaks only twice. Zophar's third speech appears to have been confused by copyists with Job's reply, and is probably contained in xxvii. 7-23. The lovely poem on the place of Wisdom in chapter xxviii is altogether unsuitable either to Job or to any of the *dramatis personae*. Some lover of good verse, finding it elsewhere, gave it perhaps a marginal place in his copy of Job (parchments being scarce in his time), and a later scribe transferred it to the text. Finally, many scholars regard the rather laboured descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan (xl and xli) in the speech of Yahweh from the whirlwind as another writer's unwanted amplification of Yahweh's general line of thought. I am not so sure that they are right, but undoubtedly the answer of Yahweh would gain by a greater economy in words. These are the main alterations which can be made with real advantage to our understanding of the work as a whole. In addition there is a mass of minor problems with which textual critics have to deal, and which no expositor of the book can safely ignore. In judging these questions we must be on our guard against the temptation to jib at all inconsistencies in the utterances of Job himself. It should be remembered that we are dealing with hot debaters, and, in the

utterances of Job, with the rapidly changing phases of an experience that, beginning in orthodoxy, ends in a far wider outlook. Allowance must be made for a certain swaying of thought in the case of so passionate a poem. For Job's conflict is not simply with his friends but with himself. And everyone who has passed on from a traditional creed to a larger faith knows how often the liberated soul is invaded by the ghosts of slain dogmas.

We come to close quarters with the purpose of the book when we consider the relation of the Prologue and Epilogue to the poem lying between them. By many scholars these prose messages are ascribed to a lost popular work of a primitive time. It would not appear that this theory rests upon any linguistic arguments. All that can really be said for it is that in Ezekiel xiv. 14 Job is referred to with Noah and Daniel as an outstanding righteous man, and this reference is certainly earlier than the composition of the Book of Job. There may have been—that is all we can say—a written tale about Job which our author utilised. But to ascribe the authorship of the prose introduction of the poem to another than the poet himself is to rob the poem of its central idea. For the scenes in heaven described in chapters i and ii are of the very marrow of the drama. They state the theory of suffering which the poem works out, namely its probational character. Surely there is no period in the history of Hebrew thought in which such a theory would be likely to emerge earlier than the time of the Exile, and that brings us to the verge of the age in which the poet himself lived. The literary affinities of the Prologue and Epilogue are post-Exilic, not

primitive. Thus, the unveiling of the heavenly courts, and especially the character of the Satan, the Accusing Angel, harmonise with Zechariah iii, a scripture of the Restoration from Babylon. Again, the most plausible objection to the authenticity of the Epilogue is that in it Job is restored to more than his former prosperity. This, it is thought, is too much in a line with that doctrine held by the friends from which the author clearly dissented. But such an objection reveals a misconception of the motif of the drama—*Doth Job fear God for nought?* If that accusation fails, as it is shewn to do, then there is no reason why Job should not be blessed with riches. For the quarrel of the author of the poem with the traditional doctrine is not that it seeks to establish the goodness of God, but that it imputes a narrow forensic motive to His actions. Part of the achievement of the book is that it pulls down an ancient structure of thought, not to leave it a ruin, but to rebuild it a larger structure, a spiritual habitation for the mind of man of more permanent make, incorporating the old materials with others formerly neglected. I hold, therefore, somewhat tenaciously to the original unity of prose and poem in this scripture. It was natural for one part to be in prose, because it was narrative which had to be set forth, and Hebrew poetry is essentially lyric rather than epic. It was equally inevitable that the passion of the great debate should break into verse. But the sheer majesty of soul Job reveals in the debate is of a piece with his utterance in the Prologue, *Yahweh gave, and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be Yahweh's Name.*

II

All consideration of the purpose of the book must be in the light of the age when it was written. I follow the *International Critical Commentary*, Dr. Peake and many others, in placing the composition of Job in the fifth century B.C.

Now several centuries earlier a Babylonian poet had set forth the fortunes of an Eastern king whose trials bear strong resemblance to the trials of Job. In this Babylonian poem we have the story of one who after a long and prosperous life was suddenly reduced to 'great misery of mind, body and estate.' Like Job he describes at length his sufferings and contrasts them with 'the kind of life to which his long-maintained piety might have been expected to lead'; and the poem contains many 'reflections on the mysteries of God's dealings with mortals.'¹ In the close contact of Israel with Babylonian culture, especially during the sixth and fifth centuries, it is not unlikely that the author of Job, who evidently was a far-travelled man and had seen Life in many aspects, derived the setting of the problem tormenting his own heart from this traditional tale. His griefs, heavy enough to himself, may yet have appeared too commonplace to arrest public attention. Did they not require that hyperbolic statement which the colossal troubles of the Babylonian sufferer supplied?

About the time when he wrote, also, in Greece, Aeschylus produced his *Prometheus Vinctus* (c. 460 B.C.)—a drama exhibiting many remarkable parallels with Job. Somewhat later we have Plato's *Republic*,

¹ *International Critical Commentary*, xxxi-xxxiv.

which, with its elaborate discussion of Justice, has an important bearing upon the Hebrew work.

If the Babylonian poet helped the framework of Job, from *Prometheus Vincitus* may have come the conception of a spirit bound in awful anguish by supernatural power, but unyielding and defiant. Again, if Plato contributed nothing to our author's achievement, at least he furnishes us with an illustration of the kind of idea which in the fifth century must have gripped the minds of men as the heart of the human problem. It will be recollected that in the earlier part of *The Republic* there is a discussion of the character of the just man. One of the speakers declares that in order to know the man who is really good (*ἀγαθός*) and not merely seemingly so, 'We must certainly take away the seeming, for if he be thought to be a just man (*δίκαιος*) he will have honours and gifts on the strength of this appearance ; so it will be uncertain whether he is what he is for the sake of justice or for the sake of the gifts. Indeed we must strip him naked of everything but justice and make his condition the reverse of his former state. Let him have the greatest possible reputation for injustice whilst not guilty of a single wrong, that his justice may be put to the test and shewn to be unyielding against infamy and all things that flow from it. And throughout his life, until death, let him be unchanging in his justice whilst always reputed unjust.'¹ That is very like the proposition which is made in the Prologue of Job. Job's piety if it is to be regarded as genuine must be tested by the removal of all hedges and supporting comforts ; he must be

¹ *The Republic*, 361, C. D.

stripped to the skin, so forfeiting the good opinion of his fellow-men and appearing in their eyes an evildoer.

Perhaps there has never been a time when this question of the genuineness of piety was not a matter of discussion. But certainly the fifth century B.C., both in Greece and amongst the Hebrew people, was a time of intense moral searching. To Plato, keenly watching the troublous course of affairs in Athens, a process of disintegration seemed at work, and the only hope lay in establishing the principles of disinterestedness, loyalty and order in the mutual relations of citizens. The belief underlying *The Republic*, that man can know what is inherently right and find therein his highest happiness, had its value only if human nature could be vindicated by selflessness in conduct. And this in that age, except for the example of Socrates, was hard to find. Further, when grave political confusion, such as Plato witnessed, falls upon any community, there is a general weakening of those conventional safeguards to our virtues which settled institutions commonly supply. Moral character suffers. Libertinism breaks out; and then the problem of the ultimate worth of the human soul becomes acute.

Amongst the Hebrew people the fifth century was the era of reconstruction under Nehemiah: it saw the republication of the Law, and it witnessed the influx of foreign cultural influences and the struggles of the stricter sort of piety against these. The age was one of adventurers, both in the original better sense of the term and in the worse. The tedious and chequered history revealed in Nehemiah and

Malachi discloses clearly enough the sordidness and selfishness and little-mindedness of men. The public conditions thus promoted pessimistic judgments amongst those who cared supremely for sincerity.

It has often been said that it was the bitterness of unmerited individual suffering created by the Exile that led to the writing of Job. It is nearer the truth to find the occasion of this scripture in the moral unworthiness of a broken or half-rebuilt social order. It would be a good thing if in some new version of the work, after the manner of the printing of a modern book, every other page were headed with the question, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* So might the reader have ever before him the real subject of the book, which too often, as things are, even scholars sometimes appear to forget. The poet, whoever he was, as already remarked, must himself have tasted profound depths of pain, but his most tormented moments were those in which he was forced to see the wickedness of men. He looked for God in His world, and at first, to borrow Newman's well-known simile, it was as if he looked in a mirror and saw no reflection of his own face.

III

Such being the problem of the Book of Job, I turn now to consider the author's treatment and verdict.

If we could think ourselves back into the life of those for whom he wrote, perhaps our first impression would be the feeling of real drama involved

in the story. We should wonder how it all could end. For a long time the issue seems doubtful. The uncertainty is felt in Heaven itself. Yahweh and the Accuser discuss the character of Job in terms which seem to imply that neither of them is quite sure how things will turn out. Yahweh's confidence in His servant is the sort of confidence a father might have in his boy as, untried and alone, he ventures out into the world. Yahweh believes rather than knows that Job will prove true under all tests of suffering. But He seems to admit that the Accuser has made out a case for such testing.

So a sea of troubles overwhelms the patriarch, and as we listen to his words of lamentation we feel that grave risks have been taken. The Accuser had said, *Put out Thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will certainly curse Thee to Thy face* (i. 11) ; and again, when this first test fails, *Put out Thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will certainly curse Thee to Thy face* (ii. 5). And for a while it looks as though he would. He falls away from his earliest piety in a clearly marked declension. His first attitude is, indeed, sublime—deliberately so. He meets his trials with no mere ejaculation of submission, but after rending his clothes, he shaves his head—probably a fairly long proceeding—and then prostrates himself in worship, saying, *Naked came I out from my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither. Yahweh gave and Yahweh hath taken away: blessed be Yahweh's Name* (i. 21). That is a faultless response to sorrow. But when the disease comes—horrible, maggot-breeding, stinking—with all its terrific nightmares and sense

of strangulation, when the sufferer, as an outcast from the town where once he had lived in comfort and honour, must climb the lofty ash-heap outside the walls and rest as he may in its squalor, is it wonderful that his submission should lose its accent of praise? He still submits, but it is in a lower key. *Shall we receive good from God and not evil also?* (ii. 10). When at least a week has passed away, a hopeless week of silent misery, only then does he lose the heroic note and fiercely curse the day of his birth. After that the bitterness of his spirit increases under the provocation of debate, and in the tenth chapter we come to the passage in which the sufferer accuses his Maker of having made him in order to torture him.

*Didst Thou not pour me out like milk ?
 And didst Thou not curdle me like cheese ?
 Thou didst clothe me with skin and flesh
 And make a fence for me of bones and sinews.
 Life and love hast Thou wrought with me
 And Thy Providence hath preserved my spirit.
 Yet all the time Thou wast hiding these things in
 Thy heart,
 And I am sure that this was Thy purpose :—
 If I went wrong that Thou would'st mark me,
 And from my iniquity would'st not let me off !
 If I should be wicked, then woe to me !
 And if I should be righteous, that I should not lift
 up my head.*

*And if, indeed, my head were proudly lifted up
 Then Thou would'st hunt me as though I were a lion !
 And again shew Thyself marvellous against me !*

*That Thou would'st renew Thy evidences against me,
And increase Thine anger,
And bring fresh attacks upon me ! (x. 10-17).*

The words remind us of Browning's Caliban as he ponders the nature of his God and watches the ants clambering about their hole,

. . . He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite.

In such passages Job seems very near to that cursing of God which had been predicted of him. Perhaps it will be well, therefore, at this point to examine what the Accuser meant by 'cursing' God to His face.

As might be expected from the nature of Semites, the Hebrew language is rich in vituperative terms. It has five different verbs properly meaning *to curse*. In Job there are three of these actually used, with a noun formed from a fourth. But the word employed in the Prologue, rendered in the Authorized Version *curse*, in the Revised *renounce*¹ and in the Revised Margin *blaspheme*, is the verb which ordinarily means *to bless*. It is startling, therefore, to read that Job was anxious about his children lest they *had sinned and blessed God in their hearts* (i. 5), and that the Accuser should have twice predicted that Job's piety would break down under suffering and that he would *bless God to His face* (i. 11, ii. 5), also that Job's wife should have bidden him *bless God and die* (ii. 9). It would appear,

¹ The *International Critical Commentary* and Peake both condemn this translation as resting upon a theory which is devoid of the slightest evidence.

however, that the usage in all these places ¹ is a piece of slang irony, very much as it obtains amongst some of ourselves in moments of careless impatience. From this view-point the use of *bless* for *curse* in Job is peculiarly effective. What Job fears for his sons in their frequent feastings is that they might be guilty, though only by secret thought, of a reckless and vulgar impiety. What the Accuser predicts of Job himself is that if his lot is changed into one of misery he will shew the ugly side of human nature, and blaspheme with the most ribald vulgarity. He will not simply curse God but, after the manner of the men of Belial, snatch at the very terms of devout speech and fling them derisively in the face of his Maker.

Near, however, as Job comes to cursing God in some term or other, he never actually reaches that point. Indeed, his seeming lack of reverence does not shew the slightest tinge of profanity. On the contrary, through all his arraignment of Providence runs a pathetic pleading that he might be allowed to present his case face to face with God. At first, it is true, when Eliphaz urges,

*But as for me I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I set out my case (v. 8),*

Job's reply is,

*He is not a man like me, that I should answer Him,
That we should come together in judgement.
(Oh that there were an umpire between us
To lay his hand upon us both !)*

¹ As also in 1 Kings xxi in the accusation made against Naboth, where the same idiom occurs.

*Let Him take away His rod from me,
And let not His dreadfulness overwhelm me,
Then would I speak and not fear Him,
For I am not craven by nature (ix. 32-35).*

But gradually the thought takes deeper hold upon him that somehow God and God alone must be his refuge. The umpire he has longed for must be God. He will appeal against God to God.

*Even now, behold, my witness is in Heaven,
And He that voucheth for me is in the heights.
My friends deride me :
I lift my tearful eye to God,
That He would decide for a man in his contest with
God,
And between a son of man and his neighbour
(xvi. 19-21).*

And again,

*Lay down, I pray Thee, a pledge, be surety for me
with Thyself.
Who else could be my advocate ? (xvii. 3).*

This means, of course, that there is a contradiction in Job's attitude. On one hand he assails the moral government of God in the most scathing terms ; on the other hand, he is ever feeling his way in the darkness towards the light of the Divine Presence. Thus it would almost seem as though the duality of attitude in the Prologue, respecting the issue of the trial, were justified by the dualism developed in Job himself, as though both Yahweh and the Accuser were right, so near does Job go to cursing his Maker, so strongly does he cleave to God's Presence.

This antinomy is a transcript of experience. One meets it in great thinkers like Lucretius, whose scorn of the gods was yet accompanied by an essential piety of attitude towards that which may be known of God *through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity*. 'His feeling for Nature,' says Dr. Masson, 'is a reverence which might almost of itself be called worship—a worship which defies his creed.'¹ There is, as has been remarked by another writer, an anti-Lucretius in Lucretius. In the same way it may truly be said there is an anti-Job in Job. And it is not so much the consummate genius of the artist as the working of true experience which leads the author to develop this discord in the patriarch's tempest-tost nature into the harmony of a new attitude to God. Throughout all the speeches of Job up to the moment when Yahweh appears to him in a whirlwind there is this constant oscillation. The light of faith leaps up in intense brilliancy, only to sink again into smouldering angry-looking embers. Thus we have one of the noblest of all his utterances in the famous 'Redeemer' passage :

*Oh that my words were now written !
 Oh that they were inscribed in a book !
 That with an iron pen and lead
 They were cut in the rock for ever !
 But I know that my Vindicator ² liveth
 And that hereafter He will stand by my grave,
 And after my skin has been thus destroyed
 Yet apart from my flesh I shall see God,
 Whom I shall see on my side*

¹ Lucretius, p. 74.

² A.V. and R.V., Redeemer.

And my eyes shall behold unestranged.

I waste away with inward yearning (xix. 23-27).

It would be a mistake to construe this great passage as an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of Immortality. From the view-point of the drama itself with its central *motif*—*Doth Job fear God for nought?*—it is even more valuable than any such anticipation could be. For Job is contented to die unvindicated, to pass into that grey underworld in which both Hebrews and Greeks believed, the land of darkness and of mere joyless shadows of men, if so be that it may be given him to have one glimpse of God as appearing over his grave to clear his character. This is, indeed, a superb instance of self-integrity, and in his declaration, momentary though it be, *I know that my Vindicator liveth*, we have an affirmation of the ultimate Justice of the Universe. One should mark, however, that the fainting cry which immediately follows, *I waste away with inward yearning*, is a lapse back into despair. So up to the last, moments continue to come in which the alienation of God is more evident than any hope of vindication. Even in his final defence we read,

I cry unto Thee, and Thou answerest me not !

I stand in prayer, and Thou starest at me ! (xxx. 20).

Neither Byron nor Shelley, nor any of the modern poets of revolt, ever wrote a line equal to this last in its deadly expression of the seeming unmorality of God. But it is precisely this cold aloofness of God which is necessary for the testing of Job, if through him human nature is to be revealed as

akin to the Divine. For if Man be child of the Eternal, like the Eternal he must be able to stand alone. And it is this independence the poet so wonderfully shews us.

We shall see this a little more clearly in the twenty-third chapter and in the twenty-seventh. Threading our way in Job's passionate and ever-varying outcrying upon God, we come to this, on a day, it would seem, of unusually grievous pain,

*But He knoweth my manner of life,
If He would assay me I should come forth as gold*
(xxiii. 10).

To us these words open the thought of the refining effect of suffering, as though Job were confident his troubles would ultimately make him a nobler being. Such a conception has often given strength to patience. But this is not Job's meaning. In his trial he has no such hope to support him. He is utterly without extraneous help. He is as a prisoner condemned to death without a trial. And his plea is that if God only would try him as an assayer tests his metal—but He won't—he would come forth from the scrutiny like approved gold. Always Job believes in himself as simply true. Thus :

*As God liveth Who hath taken away my right,
And the Almighty Who hath embittered my life,
(For all my breath is still in me,
And God's spirit is in my nostrils,)¹
Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
Nor my tongue utter deceit.*

¹ I.e. I am still in full possession of my powers.

Far be it from me ! Surely I will not shew you to be right !

Till I die I will not renounce my integrity.

My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it slip.

My conscience doth not reproach me for a single day
(xxvii. 2-6).

As A. B. Davidson pointed out, the patriarch here 'proclaims his resolution to adhere to righteousness though God and man alike shew themselves unjust.'¹ Could the Accuser receive a finer answer than this? It expresses most sanely what Job means when in one way and another he reiterates his claim, *I am perfect* (ix. 21). It is not that he denies occasional fault: he often admits his sins (x. 6, xiii. 23-26, xix. 4, etc.). But the perfect man in Hebrew thinking is not a flawless character. He is just the integrate man. To quote from Driver and Gray, ׀׀, perfect, 'implies a character that is complete, all of a piece, not, as the Satan and after him the friends insinuate, one thing on the surface and another within; it is a character that seeks its ends openly, along the one true path . . . the *tām* or *perfect* man is one whose character is full weight.'² Here the Hebrew *perfect* man walks in step with Plato's *just* man, in whom is realised a certain unity of character. The *Just*, says Socrates, is one who regulates his own inner life as though it were a household to be set in due order, under a principle of self-mastery, all the elements of his nature harmonised, the lower ruled by the higher, and all his outward actions such as help to build up this inward harmony and integrity.³ This, I repeat, is in substantial accord

¹ *Old Testament Theology*, p. 270.

² Driver and Gray, pp. 3-4.

³ *The Republic*, iv. 443, D. E.

with Job's idea of the righteous or perfect man. Where the Hebrew and the Greek ideals differ is in the more intellectual character of the latter, the Hebrew stress being rather upon purely moral considerations. Both agree in the fundamental concept of integration, wholeness, sincerity. The superiority of the Hebrew treatment of the subject lies in the further development of character unfolded through Job's debate with his friends and by the final revelation of Yahweh.

As we watch this unfolding the full answer to the Accuser is seen in three stages : first, we have the laying bare of the solid worth of Job, what he called his integrity, and we may call his sincerity : secondly, through his sufferings there is a manifest growth in character, though he himself shews no consciousness of any such development : thirdly, there is shewn us the promise of still further growth.

The first of these three points has been already demonstrated. It remains for us to see how the Divine answer from the whirlwind gives it a final attestation. All that Yahweh has to say by way of rebuking Job is summed up in the opening sentence,

Who is this person obscuring My plan with undiscerning words ? (xxxviii. 2).

So all Job's semi-blasphemous expostulations, his arraignment of God for cruelty and injustice, are simply peccadilloes—motes in his poor tried eyes, things not worth much talking about ! And in strict harmony with this grand treatment of the matter are the closing words in the prose Epilogue, in which Yahweh's original pride in Job amounts to a bold enthusiasm : *And then after Yahweh had*

spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My anger burns against thee and against thy two friends, for you have not spoken concerning Me the thing that is upright as My servant Job hath (xlii. 7). That is one of the finest and most daring sayings in all this fine and daring book. Job had said many indefensible things of God, and the friends had been God's eloquent champions throughout. Yet Job's speech had been *upright* (rather than *right* as the Authorized Version, Revised Version, etc.) in the sense of being genuine, and theirs had been false. For an orthodoxy which can blacken the character of its opponent is false in everything it says, though its actual words about the Divine may be entirely correct. And, on the other hand, he who holds at all costs to his own inner integrity, who has a sincere respect for facts whether they help faith or hinder, is ever God's best exponent. This is a truth that is foreign neither to the nobler thinkers of antiquity nor to the modern mind. 'The impious man,' said Epicurus, 'is not he who denies the existence of the gods like those commonly worshipped; on the contrary, the impious man is he who asserts the gods to be such as the Vulgar conceive them.'¹ Tennyson wrote the same when he sang,

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

On the other hand, the words of our Lord prompt the thought that inasmuch as the friends of Job had done evil to him by their false accusations they had done it unto God.

¹ *Diog.*, lx. 123, quoted by Masson in his *Lucretius*, p. 410.

So the answer to the Accuser grows clear. The question, *Doth Job serve God for nought?* implied the absence of any core of reality in the man. And it is now seen that in pain and in darkness Job holds to the things that are of God—uprightness of spirit and hatred of evil. The thing which in the fifth century B.C., and indeed in every age, the world demands to see in the man of professed piety—secret truth—is revealed beyond possibility of cavil.

Secondly, so far from there being any fundamental discrepancy in Job's moral nature, the effect of suffering upon him is to develop his essential piety. In his final retrospect he might have said as Wordsworth did after a great sorrow—

A deep distress hath humanised my soul.

For whilst the survey of his earlier life before trouble came (chapter xxix) revealed much beneficence and spiritual happiness, yet we are evidently intended to see that he never faced the problem of evil in human life until calamities came upon him. He had shared the somewhat complacent doctrine of his friends that suffering followed sin, and prosperity followed righteousness ; and this had excluded from his view many of the great disasters of life. But when upon himself in his truth and well-doing fell a series of unexplained troubles he was forced to ask, Why does God permit innocent people to suffer? That broad question accompanied all his expostulations concerning his own unmerited lot.¹ Though he could not answer it, indeed just because no answer was forthcoming, his deeper sympathies were quickened towards his fellows. He sees life no longer from the view-point of a prosperous Arab

¹ See iii. 20 ff. ; vii. 1, 2 ; xii. 6 ff. ; xiv. 1 ff. ; xxiv. 1 ff., etc.

farmer, but from that of an outcast. In this respect his experience is strikingly like that of another great character in Literature. King Lear, wronged by those who most should have loved him, homeless in a wild storm upon the heath, learnt to think more widely than without such suffering he ever would have done :

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these ? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this ! Take physic, pomp ;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel ;
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.

Precisely the same movement of thought underlies the development of Job. For not only does he reach through suffering to a wider sympathy with the miserable, but his concern for the name of God is stimulated and made ready for a larger doctrine. Like Lear his desire that Pomp might shake its superflux to wretches has this further aim, 'And show the heavens more just.' Always one can see in Job's contentions a concern for the good name of God. And gradually there breaks upon him a light for which he had never looked. God becomes more to him, even before the Divine Voice speaks from the whirlwind. It is an open question how far certain passages in his speeches indicate the dawn of faith in an after-life. Certainly Job set out from the usual unhappy view of that subject, and we cannot decisively say he transcended it. But the man who has once challenged the hopelessness

of his age with the question, *If a man die, shall he live again?* (xiv. 14), and the heart of his Maker with the prayer, *Thou wouldest long after the work of Thy Hands* (xiv. 15), is not likely in the hour of returning peace to acquiesce in the thought of another and a final separation from God. A further gain seems indicated. One might easily make too much of Job's appeal against God to God ; and yet a mind capable of framing such an appeal is surely being prepared to believe in God as in Himself a mutuality rather than a monad. In any case here is one to whom God grows more and more.

This leads us to our third consideration—the promise of still further growth. In a certain sense the victory is won when Job's final defence is spoken. The answer to the Accuser is complete. But the Divine speech from the whirlwind, sealing as it does Job's victory, throws some light upon his character by indicating the direction of his continued education. Here one may remark that the speech would have spoilt the whole book if, as some have desired, it had unveiled to Job the real reason of his sufferings. He has won so much by sorrow and by mystery that, if sorrow is now to cease, at least mystery must remain. For him Browning's question and answer are cogent :

Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain
ends too.

To keep the gain, to increase its value, no word must fall from Yahweh of that high Council in Heaven where it was decreed Job should suffer. Only this is to be given him—to see the mystery of his lot linked on to the mystery of all created life. Yahweh

comes to him clothed in a whirlwind—a seemingly lawless disturbance of natural elements. He speaks of the sweep of stars far removed from human life, of rain falling on a land where no man is, of the wild ass whose house is the wilderness, of the ostrich in her careless unmotherliness, of the eagle in its carnivorous savagery. All this suggests not so much Providence as Mystery.¹

At first one feels in reading this address sheer astonishment at its seeming perversity. Job had conjured God to appear to clear his character. His friends had desired God to appear to convict his sinful conscience. And when Yahweh does appear it is not as a God of Justice at all. Indeed a more unethical address was never ascribed to a Holy God. In real life such people as the friends of Job would be shocked at such a godless God. Apparently—apart from the trivial folly of his distraught out-crying against his Maker—all that Job needs is to take a wider survey of life, to match the mystery of his own lot with the mystery of all created things. Through his coming down in the world from health and riches to pain and poverty he has learnt a wider sympathy with his fellow-men. Let him now broaden still more and see that human life is a cosmic thing, that there are other races, other worlds in which God is real and yet mysterious too, that a man's lot is bound up with weird creatures and with heavenly movements. For the value of weirdness and the wonderful lies just in this, that it draws us out of ourself into new life. The moment everything were explained to us our growth would cease; moral decay would follow. Directly we master

¹ I am indebted for this thought to Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, pp. 80-83.

anything it begins to master us. Therefore it is that in the Wisdom of God mystery always remains, and by mystery the upward moving of our human spirit is provoked to yet higher flight. That there should be response to so stern a discipline is testimony to the potential worth of human nature, and in the case of Job, this response, made in that profound humility the Vision of God ever begets in sincere men, completes with a victorious *Yes* the reply to the Accuser's question, *Doth Job fear God for nought?*

IV

In the previous studies of this book we have been dealing with historic characters as seen in actual events, however here and there intermixed with fable. But in the Book of Job, although, as has been said, actual experience of sorrow and perplexity must lie behind it, we have a work of fiction. The question may arise in our minds, therefore, Is the integrity of Job true of men at any time? Can we find such magnificent fidelity in human nature? Or is the ancient picture merely an ideal of what human beings should seek to achieve? I do not doubt that many instances can be cited in support of an affirmation that the endurance of Job is true of the best men. The case of John Hus comes to the mind as that of one whose martyrdom was not so much in defence of truths the Church accounted heresies—for in matters of doctrine Hus did finally agree to the findings of the Council of Constance before which he was arraigned—as in defence of his own integrity: he could not, he declared, sign a formal recantation of things he had never said or

done. A nearer parallel to the case of Job is that of an obscure Turkish martyr, Mohammed Effendi, 'who, believing that death was an eternal sleep, refused at the stake to utter the recantation which would save his life, replying to every remonstrance, "Although there is no recompense to be looked for, yet the love of truth constraineth me to die in its defence."'¹

It is, however, in its approach to Christ the story of Job is chiefly remarkable. That exceedingly bitter cry,

I stand in prayer, and Thou starest at me !

has its parallel in the cry from the Cross, *My God, my God, why didst Thou forsake me ?*² By that voice out of Calvary's darkness, the voice of One of whom His chief Apostle witnessed that He *did no sin and spoke no deceitful word* (1 Peter, ii. 22) we are reminded that once in actual History a human soul, *despised and rejected of men*, left solitary by His God, made the perfect offering of righteousness without limit or condition, the one supreme assertion of what it is for man to be good.

Hence the greatest value of the drama of Job lies in its approach to *The Way*. Too often in our discussions of the Cross of Christ it has been assumed that His suffering, if unmerited (as generally agreed), must have had the quality of vicarious penalty. Had Job's trial been rightly considered we might have seen the Cross from another angle. For surely Christ's passion with all its consciousness of the

¹ Lecky's *History of Rationalism*, ii. 371.

² St. Matt. xxvii. 46. The aorist *ἐγκατέλιπες* indicates that this cry of dereliction did not escape the Sufferer until the consciousness of forsakenness was past.

gravity of human sin served the purposes of probation, rather than of punishment. And although we rule out of serious thinking the naïve conception that God needed to test the character of Jesus to discover for Himself and His Heavenly Court what its real worth might be, yet the supreme moment of revelation required everything our Lord endured to the last loud cry, if there was to be shewn to mankind, as at once the revelation of human worth and the ideal of human character, a spirit patient, loving, and in every way obedient to the Highest. For what amid all our temptations and sorrows do we most need? As Plato¹ insisted, it is not the remission of the suffering that is attached to sin. Indeed here again a Hebrew will join with the Greek in teaching us to say, *I will bear God's indignation because I have sinned against Him* (Micah vii. 9). It is a mistake to confuse remission of sins with the remission of penalties. For to banish our sins God must often retain their pains. But with all the searching discipline thus involved, our nature cries aloud, not alone for the Divine compassion, but for some vision of the better self which may yet arise in us. We long to see flawless goodness in a form like our own, some holy Figure at the head of our humanity, of whom looking up we may be able to say, He is what I am not but what I desire to be. It is the character rather than the suffering of Christ that redeems us. And towards the vision of that character the author of the world's noblest poem helps us to feel and to find our way.

¹ *Gorgias*, 472, E., etc.

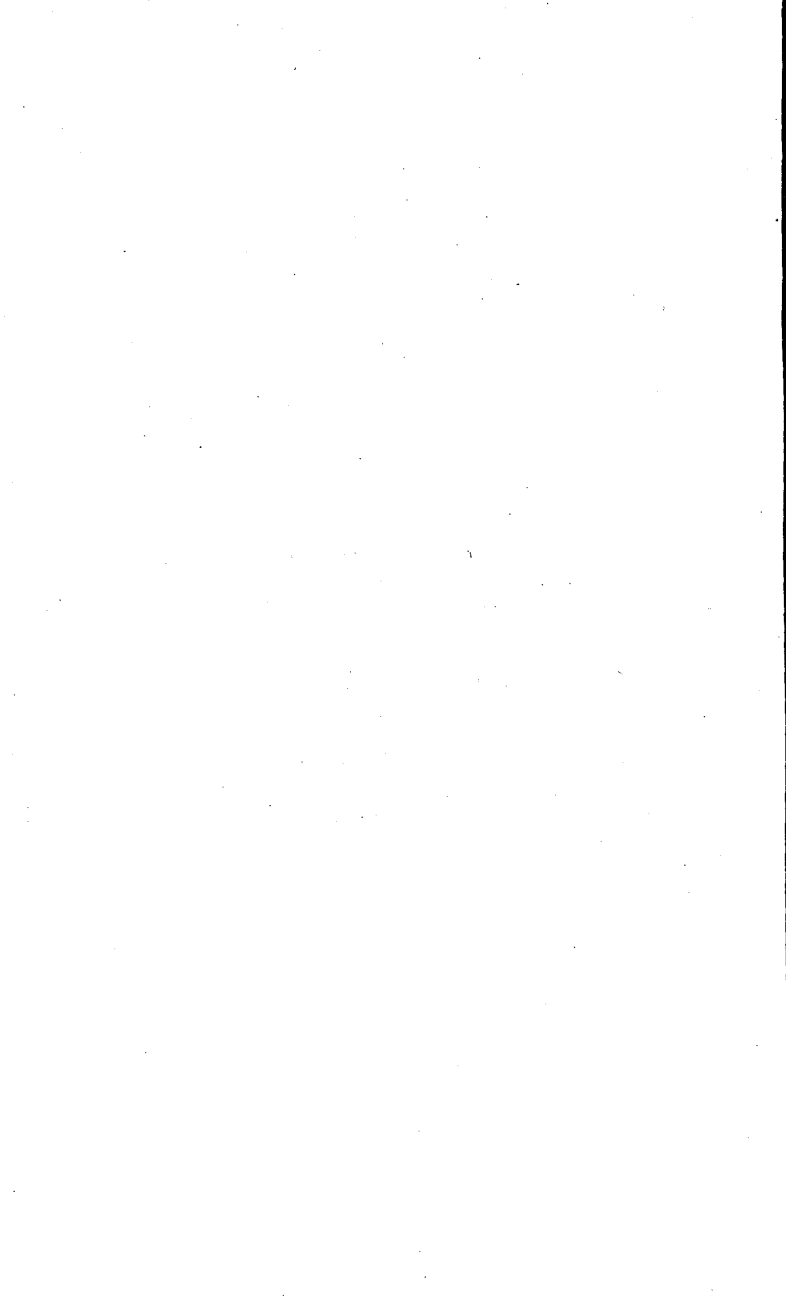
XI

THE GREAT FULFILMENT

*Then comes He
Whose mighty light
Made his clothes be
Like Heaven all bright ;
The Fuller, Whose pure blood did flow,
To make stained man more white than snow !*

*He alone,
And none else, can
Bring bone to bone
And rebuild man ;
And by His all-subduing might
Make clay ascend more quick than light.*

HENRY VAUGHAN (*Silex Scintillans*).



THE opening paragraphs of the Seventh book of *The Republic* contain a curious and suggestive allegory. Socrates pictures a partly-underground cavern, having an entrance along its entire width. Within it are seated men who from their childhood have been chained with their backs to the light and unable to look behind them. Outside, a little below the entrance, lies a road, whereon a fire has been kindled. People pass along that road, sometimes conversing, carrying on their heads statues and images and other burdens. All that the cave-dwellers see of them is a procession of quivering shadows cast upon the cave's inner wall. Now, such as these cave-dwellers, says Socrates, are we ourselves. We see no realities of the great world outside our little lives, only trembling shadows ; and now and again we hear strange echoes of voices that speak a word or two and then are silent. But, he proceeds, if one of these cave-dwellers were brought out into the full life of the world, and saw the objects themselves of which hitherto he had only seen fleeting shadows, and then went back to tell what he had seen, would he not be made a laughing-stock, and, should he persist, would he not run a risk of being put to death if the cave-dwellers only got him into their power ? Such a solitary witness to reality is the true philosopher as compared with the rest of mankind.

Perhaps when our Lord came into this world there were few philosophers who would have claimed for themselves the distinction thus accorded to their order, for the outstanding feature of the mind of that time was scepticism. But in sharp opposition to this is the characteristic *verily, verily*, of Jesus. He, indeed, seems to come from that world of realities which is known to others only in firelight shadows. There is always a firmly etched clearness in His pictures. He does not deal in surmises. God is never to Him merely 'The Grand Perhaps'; He is the one incontestable Fact. Jesus wonders, it is said, at men's unbelief. He wonders, just as I might wonder if, describing a scene under my very eyes—a farmyard, it may be, with cattle coming home at milking-time—others by my side, looking where I looked, declared they saw the sheds and stacks and yard, but no cattle, only the branches of a line of weeping willows moving in the breeze. In the end the tragedy which befalls Jesus is precisely that doom Plato had so penetratingly observed would be likely to happen to one who saw more clearly than his fellows. For it is His loyalty to the world of the Spirit which brings upon Him the condemnation of the religious leaders of His time.

He came home, says the Fourth Gospel simply and pathetically, *but His own people did not welcome Him* (St. John i. 11). We must not imagine, however, that His coming was altogether an easy thing for them, or for anyone else, to welcome. He was not uniformly benign. And the Father of whom He spoke was not as the Father conceived by modern popular Christianity, a being incapable

of displeasure, a magnified Eli, a God without relation to the majesty and sternness of the Universe. The Father Jesus proclaimed, if *kind to the unthankful and evil*, yet has no mercy for the unmerciful. *His lord*, we read in the parable of the unforgiving creditor, *was wroth, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that he (himself) owed*. And so, added Jesus grimly, *so shall also My heavenly Father do unto you, if you do not forgive every one his brother from your hearts* (St. Matt. xviii. 34-35). That is a characteristic saying of Jesus. Perhaps it is more effective as a corrective of flaccid piety than as a warning against inhumanity. In any case it is not conciliatory. Jesus had the philosopher's vision of true things but never the philosopher's manner. To Him witnessing involved warfare, thought was soaked with feeling, appropriate feeling. He could not view insincerity or cruelty with calmness. His anger was often apparent. That, indeed, has become clearer to us as we have dealt more faithfully with the Gospel tradition. In some quarters He has even been accused of too great a severity, especially in His judgment upon the Pharisees. With this criticism I do not agree. Whilst He had friends amongst them and at least on one great occasion met the sneering hostility of others of their party with the exquisite appeal of the parable of the Prodigal Son—*Child, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine*—He rightly scourged mere professors of piety, for posturing in Religion is a malady which only goes out under the whip of invective.

It is true that here we have to pick our way carefully through the records. I will neglect none

that is authentic, but undoubtedly some are not. Thus the First Gospel, which so plainly exceeds the others in the use of reproachful terms applied to the Pharisees, distorts the mind of our Lord. Twice it places upon His lips the phrase *Ye offspring of vipers*, although earlier it had attributed this to John the Baptist. One can hardly think that our Lord borrowed from John, or from popular vituperation, any epithet of the kind. Again, the fact that much of the denunciation recorded in St. Matthew xxiii. appears in St. Luke xi. 42 ff. as table-talk of Jesus in a Pharisee's house, is a clear indication that the original reference was to a group of Pharisees rather than to the whole body of that time.¹ Concerning what we may reasonably believe He did say, Professor Moore's comment should be carefully borne in mind: 'The whole point of the scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees is that they are not true to the religion they profess and their own better knowledge.'² That is to say, in speaking so sternly Jesus was taking sides with the higher life in these men against their lower. Sternness is not incompatible with goodwill, and the fundamental goodwill of Jesus, even towards the most bitter of His enemies, was evident to that one of His companions who is responsible for the words, *He looked round about on them with anger, fretting over the hardening of their heart* (St. Mark iii. 5).

Still, when all abatements on critical grounds are allowed, and the real spring of the anger of

¹ Cf. Streeter's *The Four Gospels*, pp. 253-254, and I. Abraham's *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 2nd Series, pp. 30-31: also Prof. G. H. Box in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, ix. p. 835.

² *Judaism*, i. 183.

Jesus laid bare, the fact remains that the line of a hymn often sung in our churches, 'Jesus, Thou art all compassion,' is historically untrue. He was not one of those kindly people of whom it may be said that everyone likes them.

There are indeed two features of His character which chiefly impress us, and perhaps we can best describe them by looking for a moment at that remarkable group of sayings with which the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew closes. Jesus calls the labouring and heavy-laden to Himself to learn of Him because, as He claims, He is meek and lowly in heart. Now, unfortunately the word *meek* has to-day a somewhat objectionable use. It is not the equal of the word *πραῖος* used here in the Gospel. That, as employed by one of the greatest teachers of antiquity, denoted the temper of a man who is angry only on the right occasions, and in the right manner and degree, erring if he err at all on the side of deficiency.¹ It is in perhaps this sense, rather than in the present debased idea of the quality, that the claim of Jesus, *I am meek*, may be considered reasonable.

We are on surer lines, however, when we consult the uses of the word in the Old Testament, for the predominant affinities of our Lord's mind were inevitably Hebrew, even as His whole personality was a consummation rather than an intervention. The Old Testament has a large number of references to the meek and the humble. Generally these are also the poor and afflicted. Yet they are not persons who offer no resistance to evil. Indeed, as more than one great scholar has pointed out,

¹ Aristotle's *Ethica Nichomachea*, iv. sec. v. 3-4.

'the meek ones of the Psalms are anything but men who bear patiently wrongs inflicted on them by their fellow-men.'¹ The passage which has closest resemblance to the saying of Jesus is Numbers xii. 3, *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.* The Hebrew word here used, and which is the equivalent of *πραῖος*, specifically denotes 'one who bows voluntarily under the hand of God, and is submissive to the Divine Will.'² Thus it has not so much a reference to men as to God. It describes an attitude of heart, such as a man may realise under the most varied circumstances in life, whether he is beset by adversities or spending his days in quiet pleasantness. This is precisely the meaning of our Lord's words about Himself when He said, *I am meek and lowly in heart.* The paragraph in which the words stand is a unity. It opens with the thanksgiving that the Gospel of the Kingdom had been given to babes rather than to intellectuals. Then we read: *All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.* There are, undoubtedly, profound meanings here, but the one simple and clear meaning is a description of that experience of Jesus which He would have us learn, His daily and hourly communion with God. He felt that men misunderstood Him and mismeasured His purposes. Spurned by the proud citizens of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, a man unknown amongst men,

¹ Dr. Buchanan Gray in the *International Critical Commentary* on Numbers, p. 123.

² Driver's article in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, iv. 20, and see also *The Expositor's Year Book*, ii. 29.

He yet was known to the Father, and Himself knew the Father with a knowledge which was unique. His inner life was lived in entire intimacy with the Father, intimacy so profound that all the opulence of God was already His : all things had been delivered to Him.

The meekness of Jesus was a quality of spiritual life springing out of this perfect intimacy. It was the response of His nature to the unveiling of the Father, the sheen of a spirit that ever dwelt amid eternal aspects. Always He was looking up and saying, *My Father is greater than I*. Once He said, in reproof of an idle convention of speech, *Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, even God* (St. Mark x. 18). Here was no confession of sin but the disclosure of habitual reverence, of a mind absorbed in adoration of the goodness of God.

Meekness, then, is a state of heart in which the self-element, so natural to us, is quieted under the influence of that which is spiritually greater than ourselves. It is self-negation in the Presence of the Divine Glory. It is a Godwardness of the inner life, and the consequent modifications it effects in our conduct towards our fellows arise from a natural sense of the values involved. We put up with affronts and injuries, not because we are tame, but because all such things, considered as offences against ourselves, are insignificant when laid in the balances against the Love of the Father, and only to be overcome by our manifestation of that love.

On the other hand, because meekness is primarily a spiritual quality induced in us by a Heavenly Communion, it certainly does not hinder our warfare with wrong. For *the face of the Lord is against*

evil. We can and should use language of appropriate strength, and do the things that are needfully stern, when we are confronted with inhumanity, or with religious pretence. So if we look at the context of the sayings of Jesus now under consideration we find they were spoken at a time of intense conflict. *Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not* (xi. 20). Like the crash of a hammer through some painted glass house in a pretty garden come the phrases, *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! At that season Jesus answered*—answered all the pride and luxury and selfishness of those ancient places—with these words amongst others equally surprising, *I am meek and lowly in heart.* Or if we turn to the context on the other side, we notice that the evangelist by the use of the same time-note, *At that season*, connects this utterance with a renewal of our Lord's polemic against Pharisees. In all this, although there were frequent outflashings of anger, there was no malice. He was still a man of meekness and lowliness. He could turn from His most strenuous controversies, wherein every ounce of a man's courage was called for, and find immediate solace in that love of the Father which is incompatible with personal hatreds. Like an island in some far-off tropical sea, circled round by a coral reef upon which the wildest waves break in vain, He possessed an inner lagoon of quiet waters that caught and kept the light falling from the Eternal.

This innermost life of our Lord is the crowning glory of mankind. By His communion with the Father Jesus attained that full blessedness and

satisfying vision of Truth which we, all our lifetime, are so painfully striving to reach. And because of it He is both the perfect expression of what our humanity should be and the fitting guide for everyone who would attain to the Perfect Life.

As we look back over that process of Revelation which the Old Testament records we see how true it was that, through His Heavenly communion, He came to fulfil. He gave precision to the prophetic adumbrations of eternal realities. All that is essential to the creation of character—vision, power, self-sacrifice, beauty, worship, service, love, loyalty, the spiritual prehensions of Jeremiah, integrity and the grasp of those truths upon the margin of which the author of Job so nearly adventured—all are His, gathered up into a real meekness of spirit and a hatred of sin. It is no wonder that some men saw in Him Elijah, others Jeremiah, others, again, one of the prophets (St. Matt. xvi. 14). So Henry Vaughan sings most truly of Him

He alone,
And none else, can
Bring bone to bone
And rebuild man.

And this is what He is doing. The comprehensive-ness of His humanity is reflected in the catholicity of the Society He has created. For, though it be with many a defect and perversion, He is worshipped and loved to-day by people of every colour and of every stage of culture. And through a common attitude to Him men are entering upon a community of widest life—life that reaches out to all the infinitude of God. For with all the tenderness and

practicality of His appeal to our immediate necessities we never exhaust His significance. His is

The one form with its single act,
Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
The one face, painters tried to draw,
With its one look, from throngs they saw.¹

He for ever challenges us, for ever haunts us, for ever escapes us, and, escaping, envelopes to redeem.

¹ Browning's *Easter Day*.

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